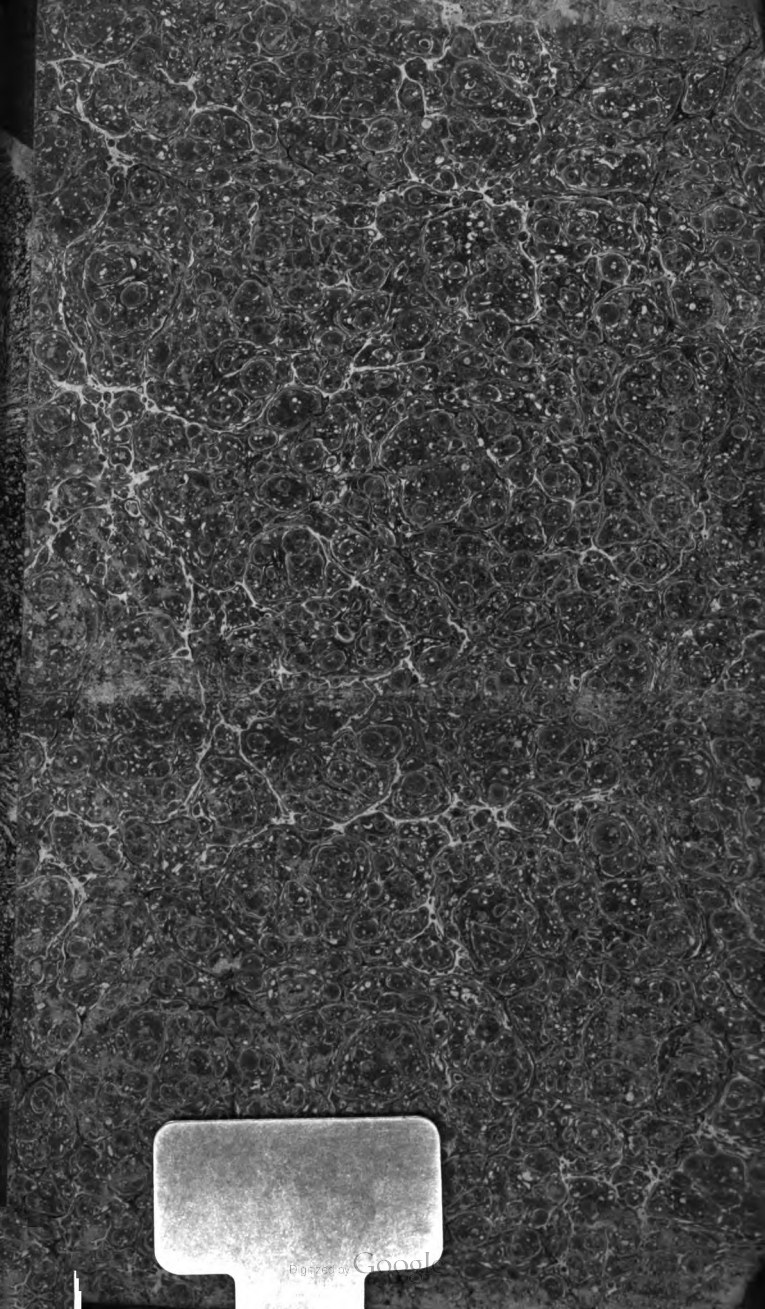
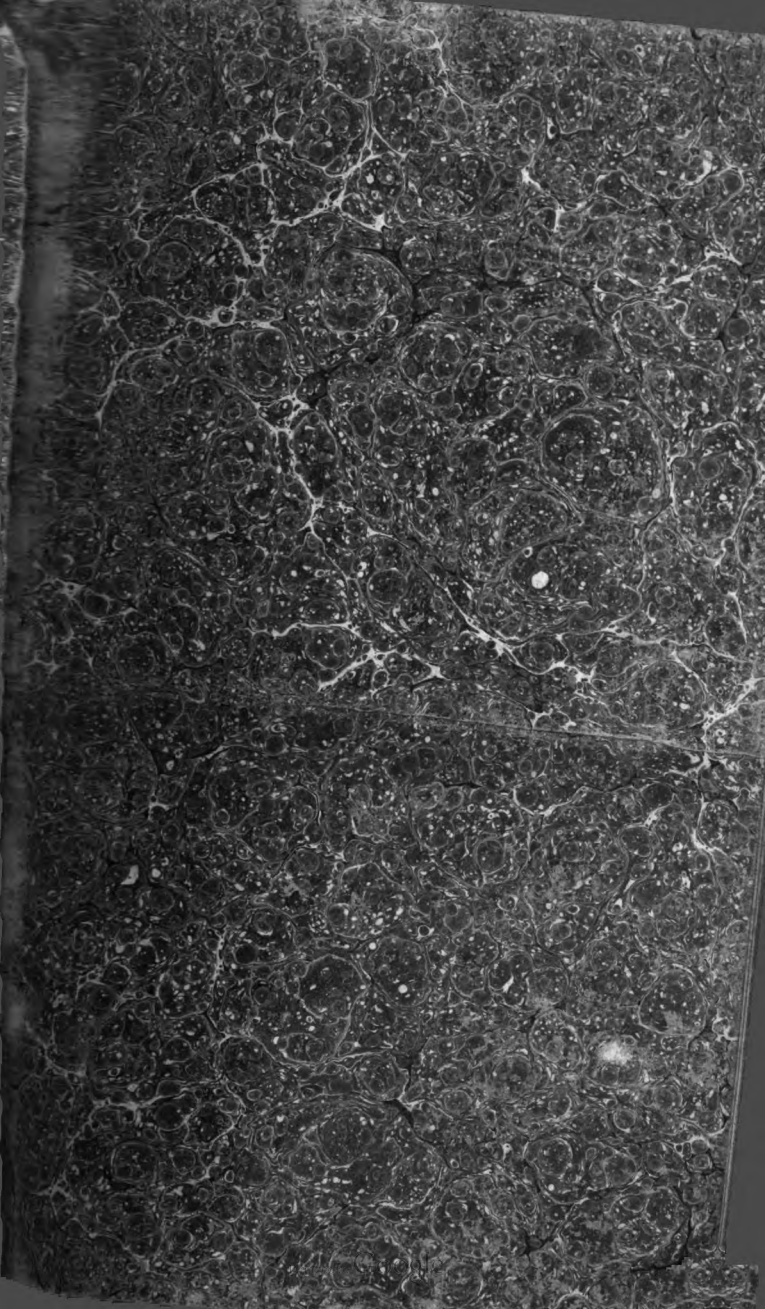






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H. J. East

SERMONS

FOR EVERY

SUNDAY AND FESTIVAL

OF THE YEAR.

Chiefly taken from the
SERMONS OF M. MASSILLON,
BISHOP OF CLERMONT.



BY THE
REV. EDWARD PEACH.

Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.—
Luke xi. 28.

VOL. II.



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THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE INCAR-
NATION.

*And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel
was sent from God into a city of Ga-
lilee called Nazareth, to a virgin . . .
and the virgin's name was Mary.*

Luke i. 26.

THAT the ways of
God are not like the ways of men, and
that the designs of Eternal Wisdom are
in direct opposition to the notions of
worldly wisdom, is a truth which is
particularly displayed in the mystery
of the incarnation of the Son of God.
—Yes, beloved Christians, the idea of
a God descending from his throne of
glory, in order to raise his creatures to

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honour and dignity ; of a God taking on himself our infirmities, and enduring the punishment which we, the unhappy transgressors, ought alone to have endured ; of a God uniting himself with man, in order to unite man with God ; this idea, I say, has been in all ages a scandal, and a folly to the wisdom of the flesh : and, even to this day, the wisdom of God in this mystery is concealed from the understanding of the worldly wise : *we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery*, says St. Paul, *which is hidden which none of the princes of this world knew*, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

According to the world, true greatness is attained only by achievements which excite the admiration and applause of men : and true happiness is to be found only in the enjoyment of sensual ease and pleasure. The world claims to itself the exclusive privilege of judging of every thing by the light of

reason ; it sees nothing with the eyes of faith. Even in its attempts to unravel the inscrutable designs of Providence, reason is the criterion by which it judges,

This is the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of God is entirely opposite. In this mystery, in particular, the folly of such calculations as these is made clearly manifest.—The poverty and humiliation of a God-man loudly proclaim that the creature cannot seek to be exalted, but in defiance of the laws of strict justice ; and that the greatness, which alone is worthy of his ambition, is to be attained, not by riches and honours, but by walking in the lowly paths which were trodden by his Divine Master : secondly, the voluntary subjection of the Son of God to privations and sufferings, informs us that the sinner has forfeited his right to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures : and thirdly, the incomprehen-

bility of this mystery proves, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the mysteries of revelation far surpass the powers of human reason, and consequently, that they are not to be submitted to its investigation. These three points shall form the subject of this discourse.

1. In order to place before your eyes in a proper light the important instructions which may be deduced from this adorable mystery, it will be necessary to describe the principal characteristics of human pride, and their opposition to the humiliation of the Son of God in his union with our nature.

Pride, in the first place, claims an imaginary merit from the possession of wealth, honour, and reputation; and to these it declares that homage is due without any reference either to the virtues or vices of the possessor.

The circumstances which attend the Incarnation of the Eternal Word,

prove, on the other hand, that the glory of the world is vain, and that the grace and friendship of God is the only source from which real honour can be derived.—Who would not have supposed but that a mystery, the figures of which had been so splendid, the preparations so grand, and the promises so magnificent, would have been accomplished in the fulness of time, with every demonstration that could add lustre to the event? and that, when the God of heaven vouchsafed to visit his creatures, he would have appeared surrounded with glory and majesty, which would have ensured to him the homage and submission of the whole universe?—But the designs which the wisdom of God had in view were to be effected by other means. This, the greatest mystery of the Deity, is performed in the greatest obscurity. The chaste Virgin, who is preferred before all others, and in whose womb is

wrought the ineffable secret of the humiliation of a God, is distinguished from the rest of her tribe by her innocence and purity alone. The splendor of her descent from the royal stock of David is veiled in poverty. The heavens are not opened with that awful solemnity, as they formerly were on a less solemn occasion, when the glory of the Lord descended on Mount Sinai : the angels are not commissioned to announce his arrival by the sound of trumpets and thunders : the mountains do not re-echo the canticles of the heavenly choirs : the clouds hold their accustomed majestic course, and are not suffered to stoop to rain down the Just One. A single messenger from heaven, invisible to the rest of mankind, appears under a human form to Mary in the silence of retirement, and in one of the remotest corners of Judea. Even Joseph himself is not acquainted with the heavenly embassy.

In all the painful mysteries of our redemption, the humiliations of the Son of God are attended with the greatest publicity ; in this, all is performed in obscurity : because it was the design of Eternal Wisdom to correct the false opinions of mankind, and to substitute the virtues of faith in the place of the former illusions of human wisdom.

It had hitherto been the received opinion, that temporal prosperity was an indubitable testimony of the favours of heaven, that a great name was a real blessing, and that splendid talents were invariably the gift of a propitious Deity. But in this mystery the wisdom of God discloses to us another order of things, other blessings, other honours, other distinctive marks of glory. It informs us that innocence and virtue are the only riches of man : that the merit of the faithful soul is centered in the heart : that the lowest degree of charity exalts the Christian.

to a higher pitch of glory than the empire of the whole world : that patience, humility, and meekness, are the most estimable qualities of the disciple of Jesus ; and that the conquest of his passions in the sight of God alone is a more substantial, a more permanent honour, than the conquest of provinces and kingdoms.

This is the new order of things which the mystery of the Incarnation has disclosed to mankind. But, my beloved friends, what effect has it hitherto produced ? Is it not true, that the world is as much attached to earthly glory in these days of Christianity, as it was in the days of ignorance ? Where is the man, who contemplates with the eyes of faith the empty pageantry of human greatness, and who reserves his admiration for the gifts of grace and the merits of holiness ? To whom do you pay the greatest homage ? To the ambitious leader, who, at the

head of a numerous host, conquers kingdoms, and makes the world resound with the fame of his exploits, or to the just man, surrounded by his innocence alone ; who suffers injuries and affronts in silence ; who endures humiliations with joy ; who stifles the swellings of resentment ; who fights and conquers for heaven ? By what honours do you yourselves seek to be distinguished ? Are they the honours which flow from a more lively faith, a more ardent charity, a more pure conscience, a more inviolable fidelity to all your duties ? Far from it : in general, you are solicitous only for the distinctions of birth, of riches, and of talents : you disregard the greatness and dignity which are derived from innocence and grace : you look down with indifference on those actions, which have eternity alone for their object. — But, my beloved, why will you not attend to the instructive les-

son, which is enforced by an authority not human, but divine ; not of men, but of God himself ? Is it in reason, not to act up to the conviction of your own minds ? Why, then, since you know it, should you hesitate to act as if you were thoroughly convinced, that to be great or contemptible in the eyes of men is a matter of very little consequence ; that you can arrogate to yourselves no more than what you possess in the sight of God ; that faith strips you of your borrowed ornaments, and exposes your true state to view ?

Pride, indeed, attends to the exterior alone ; and this may be called its second characteristic. According to its maxims, virtue and vice are only then matters of serious consideration when they happen to be publicly known ; that they have no inherent qualities of their own ; and that there is no other praise or censure to be

courted or dreaded, than that which is excited by the approbation or disapprobation of our fellow mortals.

In order, therefore, to teach us that the judgments of this world are vain; that neither its censures are to be dreaded, nor its applauses courted; and that the Christian is to be solicitous for the approbation of God alone, our Blessed Saviour voluntarily submits to the greatest humiliations, puts on the appearance of a slave, and becomes, as it were, the outcast of all.

Omitting the reasons for this wonderful conduct on the part of God, let us examine whether it has produced its effect on the morals of mankind. Are we all convinced of the impropriety of being influenced solely by the opinions of others? Are we all convinced that it is impossible to please men, and to be at the same time the servants of Christ? that this is not the day of our manifestation? and that we have no

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right whatever to expect that our characters will be fully known and established, until the day when we shall appear with Christ in glory? Ah! so far from having reason to hope that these are the sentiments of the world at large, it is but too manifest, that the care and attention which are paid to the opinion and applause of men, even by those who profess to follow righteousness, could not be much greater, if the pursuit of them had been recommended and enforced by the example of our Divine Master himself. We do every thing to be seen by men: even in the works of humiliation, this is our usual failing. We see it on almost every occasion, and in every occurrence. The general practice is, to speak slightly of our own actions, and to humble ourselves before others. If you think that this is done in general from good and christian motives, you are wrong. Men frequently stoop,

only that they may rise the higher. If we are better spoken of than we deserve, that circumstance augments our pride : we are pleased with the praises which our hearts and consciences disavow : we pride ourselves on the mistaken judgment of others, and are more flattered by the error which ascribes to us only an imaginary importance, than humbled by the sense we have of our own real unworthiness. If we conceal ourselves, it is only in hopes that we shall be discovered : if we shun applause, it is only that applause might follow us : if we ~~can~~ but perform extraordinary works of penance, alms-deeds, or prayer, we are solicitous that they should be publicly known ; and if we pretend to conceal them, we take precautions that they should be discovered by other means.—Pride has numberless ways of attaining its ends ; and no virtue is more uncommon than voluntary humility exercised with the

sole view of appearing little and contemptible in the eyes of men.

Our divine Redeemer, on the contrary, cloaths himself with the appearances of sin on purpose to endure its reproach. He takes on himself our iniquities, merely to become the victim. He refuses to be made king, only that he might die like a slave. The most disgraceful outrages are the recompense of his humiliations : man disowns him to the end ; and he expires in the very arms of ignominy and shame.

Let us, my beloved, frequently cast our eyes on this divine model, and contemplate the humiliations of the Word Incarnate. Let us reflect, that pride is the parent of almost all our crimes, and that the eradication of the greater number of our failings depends on the destruction of this vice. Let us incessantly upbraid ourselves for this incongruous alliance of weakness with vanity ; of the humbling law of

the flesh, with the exalted pretensions of pride; of what we wish to appear, with what we really are in the sight of God.—Then, after being convinced that we ought not to be exalted in the presence of an humbled God, let us reflect that the disciples of a Saviour, who became a man of sorrows for their redemption and example, cannot in justice pretend to a life of ease and enjoyment.

2. Had man continued in the state of original justice, he might have claimed the right to a life of uninterrupted happiness and peace: but having fallen from that happy state, he is entitled only to sufferings and misery. The man who is unworthy of life, has no right to enjoyments: pleasure is a fruit to which he has no claim, and labour and toil are his only due.—In order that this unwelcome truth might be deeply fixed in our minds, in order that we might be induced to love that,

which, since the fall, is become indispensable, our Lord himself endured ignominy and pain : he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in his footsteps, and learn to suffer for ourselves. For this reason, the ministry of the Word Incarnate was a ministry of tribulations. He bequeathed his cross to his disciples : he calls those only happy, whose days are embittered by sufferings ; and lest any favourable interpretations might be put on his maxims, he voluntarily expires in the most excruciating tortures. Since, therefore, the Word Eternal, whose every word and action was intended to promote our instruction in the ways of life, led a painful and sorrowful existence during the days of his mortality, the Christian cannot arrive at the happy term of salvation by the paths of ease and pleasure. God-man is the head of the christian body, and we are the mem-

bers. As members, we must partake in the sufferings of the head, and our lot in this world must be similar to his.

With this great example before our eyes, can we, with any appearance of reason, entertain the idea, that the man who leads an indolent and sensual life, who is conformed in every thing to the world, and to his own will, although perhaps it tends not to the violation of an express command, that such a man, I say, is sufficiently animated with the spirit of God, and complies with the laws of the gospel as far as is sufficient to ensure his salvation? We cannot say it. It was not thus that the apostles announced the gospel to our ancestors. The spirit of the gospel is a holy eagerness of suffering, an incessant attention to mortify self-love, to do violence to the will, to restrain the desires, to deprive the senses of useless gratifications : this is

the essence of Christianity, the soul of piety. If you have not this spirit, you belong not, says the apostle, to Jesus Christ: it is of no consequence, that you are not of the number of the impure and sacrilegious, of whom the apostle speaks, and who will not be admitted into the kingdom of God. You are equally strangers to him; your sentiments are not his; you still live according to nature; you belong not to the grace of our Saviour; you will therefore perish, for it is on him alone, according to the apostle, that he has placed our salvation.

A complaint is sometimes made, that we render piety disgusting and impracticable, by prohibiting many pleasures which the world authorises. But, my beloved friends, what is it we tell you? Allow yourselves all the pleasures which Christ would have allowed himself; faith allows you no other: mix with your piety all the

gratifications which Jesus Christ would have mixed in his ; the gospel allows no greater indulgence. This is the spirit of piety. If you have not this spirit, your exemption from grosser crimes will not avail you to salvation : you belong not to Christ, and you will have no part in him.

Severe as this doctrine may appear to flesh and blood, the experience of every true Christian assures us that it is rendered easy and agreeable by the most pure, the most enviable consolations. The seat of true pleasures is not in the senses, but in the heart ; there it is that the graces of the Lord flow in abundance. Although the just man appear sorrowful and dejected in the eyes of others, an invisible Comforter replenishes his heart with the most chaste delights,—delights, of which the sensual man can form no conception. Oh ! that the world knew where true happiness was to be found !

3. Lastly, the mystery of the Incarnation is intended to humble the pride of man, by obliging him to captivate his understanding to the belief of an article which surpasses his comprehension.

The Author of your being has appointed that you should work out your salvation, not by reason, but by faith. The great truths of religion are to be discovered, not by the efforts, but by the submission of the understanding; the secrets of heaven are shewn only *in a dark manner*, (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) and you must believe in order to understand.

How frequently, nevertheless, do christian philosophers assume to themselves the right of judging concerning the mysteries of faith! They call in question every thing that appears wonderful, or inconceivable. They doubt the existence of those eternal flames which the divine justice has prepared

for the unchaste and the impious : they dare to examine, whether children can inherit the punishment due to the crime of their forefather ; and whether our innate corruption be not the offspring of nature, instead of the consequence of sin : they doubt whether the gratification of our sensual desires,— desires which seem to be implanted in our very existence, can be imputed to us as crimes, according to the laws of justice. They criticise the wonderful prodigies recorded in the Bible, and attempt to account by natural causes for the facts which the faith of our ancestors attributed solely to the extraordinary interposition of the Omnipotent.

But, my beloved, reflect that you adore a God made man. This alone is sufficient to silence your objections. Professing this belief, it is folly, says an ancient father, to call in question any other mystery, merely because it is

inaccessible to reason. There is no incomprehensible mystery which Jesus Christ God-man does not divest of its incredibility. Either, then, renounce Jesus Christ, or acknowledge that God can do more than you can comprehend: either blaspheme with the impious, and say that he is no more than the son of Joseph and Mary, or, if you confess that he is the Christ the Son of God, refuse not your assent to the other mysteries of faith.

Let us rather emulate the docility of Mary, who on this day became the Mother of the Word Incarnate. What could be more incomprehensible to human nature, than that she should be both mother and virgin, and that the child which was to be born of her should be called the Son of the Most High? Nevertheless, no sooner is this mystery announced to her by the heavenly messenger, than, without hesitation, without even asking for a sign

from heaven, she believes, and acknowledges the power of God. Zachary, on the contrary, with the examples of Sarah and the mother of Samuel before his eyes, hesitates, and disbelieves. A simple and innocent Virgin immediately bows down before the omnipotence of God. A priest learned in the law doubts, and calls in question the divine power. Great learning generally takes away from the simplicity of faith ; as if the more we were enlightened by worldly wisdom, the less we were able to penetrate the clouds which envelope the mystery^{ies} of the Deity.

Live, therefore, by faith : begin by purifying your hearts : innocence is the source of true wisdom. Invite Jesus into your souls : with him you will possess all the treasures of learning : be ardent in love ; this is the only avenue to truth ; you cannot know God until you love him. Reflect, that a corrupted heart cannot possess a pure

and sound reason, fit for the contemplation of heavenly things. The nearer you approach to God by grace, the more will you be enlightened: the greater advances you make in the way of his commandments, the more will you increase in spiritual wisdom; and the more clearly will you behold those divine truths which we shall hereafter contemplate without a veil, when we are become like to him, who on this day is become like to us.

PASSION-SUNDAY.

ON CONTRITION.

*Jesus said to the Jews, who amongst
you shall convince me of sin?*

John viii. 46.

IN this gospel our blessed Saviour warmly asserts his innocence, and with indignation refutes the calumnies of the Jews. But why this warmth in the breast of the meek, the humble Jesus? Was he not the Lamb of whom it was said, that he should be led to the slaughter without opening his mouth? Was it not he whose meekness would not suffer him to break the bruised reed, nor to extinguish

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the smoking flax? Why then this warmth and indignation? The reason is obvious. He came on earth to suffer, and to shed his blood for our salvation, and on that account he met sufferings with joy. But in quality of our High Priest — holy — innocent — and undefiled, he ~~would not be~~ silent under the imputation of sin. So infinite was his hatred of the crime of rebellion against the Almighty, that he could not endure that the testimony of others, however unfounded, should lay it to his charge.

What an instructive lesson, my beloved, may be drawn from this example of our Saviour! What a perfect idea may be formed of the sorrow which ought to rend our hearts, when we survey the multiplied guilt which we have incurred by our sins! This subject may be treated with peculiar propriety at this time: for, now it is that every member of the Church will be

summoned to approach the sacred tribunal of reconciliation, and wash away his defilements in the precious blood of the Lamb : now it is that every sinner will be called upon to excite in his soul the most unfeigned detestation of sin, and to return to the Lord by a true and hearty sorrow for all his past disloyalties. To this subject, therefore, I will call your attention ; and I trust that a just delineation of the essential requisites of contrition will produce the most beneficial effects at this season.

1. Contrition, in the first place, is a supernatural virtue, and consequently depends on the co-operation of divine grace. Man of himself is too weak, too much under the influence of terrestrial and present objects to be greatly affected either by the goods or evils of a future life : and therefore, unless he be aided and assisted by the grace of God, he is incapable of raising his soul to those sublime conceptions which constitute

the essence of supernatural virtues. Of this nature is contrition. It consists in a determined hatred of sin, infused by the Holy Ghost, on account of its opposition to the infinite sanctity of the Deity:—it consists in a sincere and heartfelt grief for the sins already committed, — a grief occasioned by the clear view with which the sinner beholds, by the light of faith, the outrage which he has offered to God, and the evils which he has entailed on himself:—it consists in a fixed resolution to avoid all sin for the future,—a resolution, inspired by the love which the repentant sinner begins to entertain for God, the source of all justice. This is true contrition. Sorrow which is not founded on these principles, is imperfect, and insufficient to complete the great work of justification.

Now, my beloved friends, let me entreat you to look into your souls, and examine whether these are the

sentiments which have hitherto accompanied you to the sacred tribunal of penance. In preparing for this sacrament, it is probable that you have more than once experienced something of the bitterness of sin: your minds have been much agitated, and your hearts have been secretly troubled within you. But from what did this proceed? From a sincere grief for having offended so great, and so good a benefactor? This would be much; for this is every thing: but this, alas! is by no means always the case. In general, I very much fear, it is quite otherwise. We have much to do whenever we are at war with our natural propensities. The sight of our manifold offences, numerous as they are, would oftentimes occasion little anxiety within us, if the indignity, which is thereby offered to the majesty of the God of heaven, were the only consideration we had to look to.

We look to ourselves in general; and seldom to any thing besides. It is the fear of disclosing to our director the enormities, which we would gladly hide even from our own inspection: it is this circumstance, which, more than any other consideration, is the thing that so terribly appals us. This, my beloved, is no unusual occurrence. There is no man, however low in his own esteem, who, if he thinks he is going to lower himself in the esteem of another, does not feel a sensible regret. Thus it happens that pride is oftentimes mistaken for repentance, and the natural aversion which all of us feel towards self-debasement, for true sorrow and compunction for sin. It is our vanity that is humbled: we feel the remorse which this circumstance naturally instils into our minds; and we immediately conclude that we are in full possession of all that is most essentially necessary, namely, the sin-

cere sorrow of a contrite and humble heart.

The sensations, however, which are created by shame are not to be indiscriminately condemned ; for, a salutary confusion is invariably the attendant on true contrition, and there is a shame which leads to salvation: *All the day long, exclaims the royal prophet, my shame is before me, and the confusion of my face hath covered me, Ps. xliii. 16.* But then, this confusion must arise from the same principle as the contrition itself. The just man is *sorry* for his sins, because they offend his God ; and he is confounded at the sight of his sins for the same reason, namely, because they are exposed in their most odious colours before the eyes of an omniscient Deity. As for the contempt or ridicule of men, he sets it completely at naught: the contempt of God is his only subject of alarm.—The true penitent, therefore, is overwhelmed

with confusion when he exposes the secrets of his conscience; but his confusion bears no kind of similitude to that which originates in pride and self-love.

It likewise frequently happens, that, after we have examined the state of our interior, and after we have discovered the multitude and enormity of our offences, we are seized with terror and consternation. Hell and eternity seem to stare us in the face: and the dread of that terrible abyss, on the brink of which we have been heedlessly sporting, rushes powerfully on the mind. Under the influence of some such terrifying impressions as these, we throw ourselves before the ministers of Christ, we confess our sins, and readily conclude that our sorrow is sufficiently intense to find acceptance with God, and move him to be reconciled to us. My dear friends, I do not say that this is at all times the case; but

it is more than probable that it oftentimes is so with many, and that their sorrow is nothing more than the produce of self-love, the slavish dread of punishment. And is it in reason to be supposed that men, actuated by no better principles than these, can possibly possess that love of God which prefers Him, his will and law, before all things? No: the sorrow that proceeds from the sensation of fear alone, is little better than the sorrow which proceeds from shame. The honour and glory of God are to them objects of indifference: They are disgusted with sin merely on account of the consequences that will result personally to themselves. Their will is not changed: it is just as depraved as it was before: their propensities are as bad as ever: their inclinations are as corrupt; their affections as heartily wedded to the world and its pleasures; and so far are they from entertaining a sincere love of God, that

they would gladly continue on in their vicious courses, if they knew that the loss of his love, or the withdrawing of his friendship, would be the only consequence that would ensue from their iniquitous proceedings.

I acknowledge that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and that it is salutary to penetrate frequently with the eyes of faith the dreadful abyss of fire and darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth ; to descend in spirit into hell ; and, by the view of future torments, to place a restraint on the lawless passions of the breast. I acknowledge that this fear is a gift of the Holy Ghost : and far be it from me to deprive sinners of a means of salvation, and of a motive for compunction which Christ himself held out, which the Church recommends, which the saints had continually before their eyes, and which we ourselves daily employ with the view of disturbing the

slumbers in which sinners pass their days. For, my God! if, notwithstanding thy threats of avenging flames, if, notwithstanding the view of hell and its eternal torments which thy justice has prepared for sinners, if, I say, iniquity still prevails on the earth, and all flesh hath corrupted its ways, would there be any faith remaining among men, were we imprudently to endeavour to turn away their eyes from this dismal spectacle; or were we to declare that the motive the most common and the most universal, ought to be disregarded. The noble and generous souls, whom love alone attaches to the service of their Maker, are few in number. Love is the wisdom of the perfect. The weak stand in need of indulgence; and God willingly consents that self-interest should be one great incitement to their fidelity.

The fear of the torments, therefore, which God has reserved for the wicked,

is one ingredient of contrition, but it is not the only, nor the principal one. Love alone drew our hearts from God, and love alone can restore them to him. Love caused the depravation of our will, and love must restore it to its primitive state of subjection. Love, therefore, is the principal ingredient of contrition; we must begin to love God in preference to all creatures; and then the virtue of the sacrament, united with this love, although perhaps it may not have attained its perfection, will effect our reconciliation with God, and complete our justification. I exclude not, I say, from contrition the fear of punishment: I exclude only the criminal dispositions of those men, who, if there were no torments, no hell in store, would live like atheists without a sense either of morality or religion, without the use of any of our sacred institutions: who are callous to every sentiment of love; who are

roused only by the threats of future judgments; and who in their own minds are grieved that God is just, and that he has attached eternal torments to the most shameful excesses.

You may say, perhaps, that few men are influenced by these unchristian dispositions. Ah! would to God that your assertion was founded on truth. But experience too plainly demonstrates that the number is very few who are not actuated by them. Fear is almost the whole of our religion. We divorce ourselves from our passions only for a moment: we separate ourselves from them as from objects which are dear to us, but dangerous. Like the wife of Lot, we do not hate Sodom, we are afraid only of the flames.—The spirit of true piety is less diffused in the world than you imagine. Our virtues are for the most part counterfeit virtues. We entertain, indeed, a hatred for mortal sin: but for what reason?

because it will be succeeded by eternal torments. This is manifest from our unconcern about venial sins : which, because they will not subject us to the same miserable eternity, we commit with little or no scruple, notwithstanding their opposition to the sanctity of God. If, therefore, we impartially scrutinize the affections of our hearts, we shall discover that few of our actions are influenced by principles either of grace or love, and that hell is almost the only object of our fears.

But how are we to discover the real dispositions of our souls ? and by what marks are we to distinguish whether the perturbation of our minds on these solemn occasions is the genuine offspring of true repentance, or whether it only originates in the sense of shame, the effect of our wounded pride, mixed with a low, and mercenary fear ? In plain terms, (for my wish is to set you right in a matter, which, though little

thought of, is of the utmost consequence) in plain terms, then, if the fear, which is so apt to beset us on these occasions, is not accompanied with a real and sincere resolution of forsaking the ways of sin, and embracing a life of true christian piety in future, be assured, that it is not the effect of sincere sorrow, and that it has nothing in it that can possibly connect it with true repentance. "Wilt thou be made whole?" said our blessed Saviour to a man stricken with the palsy. The same question is proposed to you, whenever you approach the sacred tribunal of penance. Will you be made whole? Do you wish for a perfect cure? Are you bent upon renouncing your former bad habits? and do you, before God, and with a deliberative mind, firmly resolve to enter upon a new life, a life of true christian piety for the future?

This, my beloved brethren, is the

question proposed to you, and what answer are you prepared to make?

Will you candidly declare that you are resolved to break the chains which bind you to the world, and to labour henceforward for salvation by the uniform and constant practice of christian virtues? Remember that the question is not, whether you have made vague and indefinite resolutions of amendment—resolutions, which will never be put in execution, and which are calculated only to deceive the penitent, and cause him to perpetrate the horrid sacrilege without a consciousness of the crime, and consequently without remorse: but the question is, have you that strong, that complete, that sincere will to be reformed; which has given proofs of its determination by the tears of compunction which it has already drawn from you? *Will you be made whole?* This is the question which is proposed to you in the name of Jesus.

Your conscience cannot here deceive you. A moment's reflection will discover whether you are sincere or not. All the preliminaries of a thorough conversion of the heart to God are as strongly marked as any thing in nature can be. They are instantly distinguished: they cannot be mistaken. Tears, conflicts, interior troubles, new plans of conduct, sensations which perhaps you never felt before: these are the pangs which announce the birth of the new man in the soul. In the midst of such tumults, in the conflicts of such impetuous winds as these, if I may be allowed the expression, the Spirit of God descends on the penitent heart, as he did on the apostles, and he descends with his best gifts.

Examine yourselves, therefore, my beloved friends; you, I mean, whose lives have been devoted to the world and sin: see whether the protestations you have made to alter your

plan of life for the future, have been marked with this kind of trepidation and sorrow,—these unequivocal tokens of a true repentance, whenever you presented yourselves at the sacred tribunal of reconciliation.

My object is not to aggravate the matter, but to state it to you exactly as it is. Let no man say, that the sorrow, which is concealed in the interior of the soul, is sometimes without any very sensible operation on the mind. To argue on such a supposition would be wrong. A change of life is in such direct opposition to our favourite inclinations, and is brought about by such lively, and hitherto unfelt sentiments of divine love, that it is impossible it should take place without operating powerfully on the mind. Were the penitent of a cold, phlegmatic, callous disposition, the case, perhaps, would be otherwise: but this is not your disposition. Your hearts are natu-

rally tender, and easily affected. In the ardour, with which you have followed after earthly objects, you have shewn the sensibility of your nature, and have sufficiently proved what your minds are capable of. You even boast of the goodness and benevolence of your disposition. And is it possible that your hearts should be then only void of feeling, when God challenges your affections? Is it possible that sorrow for sin should be the only sorrow that can make no impression on your minds? This is an illusion, my beloved friends. If men are not as much in earnest in the great duty of repentance, as they usually are in the pursuit of their pleasures, the reason is, that they are sincere libertines, but that they are by no means sincere penitents.

True contrition, therefore, consists not merely in the dread of the tor-

ments of hell, or in ineffectual resolutions of amendment ; but it consists principally and essentially in a true and sincere grief of heart for having offended so great, so good, so amiable a God. It takes its rise, not in the love of ourselves, but in the pure love of God above all things.—This love necessarily induces the penitent to take proper measures to avoid a repetition of the same offences : and these measures are not confined within any given time. It obliges the penitent to renounce the world, at least in affection, and all pleasures and pastimes from which God is excluded. It obliges him to pluck out an eye, and cut off a limb, or, in other words, to make the most painful sacrifices when his eternal interests require them.—This is true contrition.

What opinion, then, must we form of these penitents, who are only soli-

citous to avoid sin for a few days previous to their confession ; whose only interior monitor is the catalogue of sins in their prayer-books ; whose only sentiments of contrition are those transient affections which are excited by the perusal of the preparatory prayers ; who confess their sins only by halves ; who make some faint resolutions of amendment, keep them for a few days, and then relapse into their former disorders ? These false penitents receive not the sacrament. Their sins are still imputed to them, with the addition of the enormous crime of sacrilege. What a state is this, my beloved ! How hopeless is their salvation ! And yet, nothing is more common : the number of true penitents is very small. Many are called to the sacrament of penance, but few partake of its fruits.

Enter, therefore, seriously into yourselves. Now it is, that the Church in a particular manner solicits the Lord

to shower down his mercies on the most abandoned sinners. Let each one interrogate his own heart. Let him enquire what have been his principal pursuits, and what the general tenor of his conduct through life. Perhaps he will find that his present failings are but a continuation of the follies of his youth: that they have increased with his years: that he is at present precisely what he appeared to be almost at the first dawn of reason, voluptuous, passionate, and tepid. Yes: we have passed through the different stages of life, but our passions have attended us through them all. Our lives have been one continued series of transgressions, diversified only by circumstances, and change of situation. *One day hath instructed the next, and one night hath uttered knowledge to the ensuing,* Ps. xviii. 3. The buds of our passions appeared in our childhood, and our riper years were defiled with the same

produce of corruption, which imbitters our palate at the present moment.

And yet, my God ! thy avenging arm has not been stretched upon me. From the throne of thy justice thou didst witness my abominations, and thou hast spared me in preference to thousands. Ah ! why hast thou prolonged my days to this hour, in the midst of such wickedness ? Thou hast undoubtedly mercies in store for me. Thou wouldst not have preserved me from the dangers which have so often threatened my life, wert thou not desirous of shewing forth the riches of thy grace in my repentance.

Great God ! I begin to detest my evil ways sincerely. Finish thy work, and cause me to love the remedy. The state of my conscience fills me with alarm ; the corruptions and the disorders of my life overwhelm me with confusion : the remorse occasioned by my crimes imbitters all my days. Fi-

nish, O God ! thy work. Break asunder the chains of my captivity. Subdue my rebellious will. Support my weakness in a conflict, which has so often proved superior to my strength. Depart not from me ; and grant that I may never regain the tranquillity and peace which I have lost, until I am firmly resolved to be thy faithful servant for ever.

PALM-SUNDAY.

ON COMMUNION.

Tell ye the daughters of Sion, behold thy King cometh. . . Matt. xxi. 5.

THE oracles of the prophets, the manifestations of the Lord to the patriarchs, the sacrifices and oblations of the law, together with its mysterious signs and figures, announced to the unfaithful Jerusalem, during the space of several ages, that her Deliverer and her King would visit her in the fulness of time, and be seen in the midst of his people. At length the Precursor appeared, and by the command of God announced his arrival.—These happy tidings, so far

from being the subject of universal joy to this ungrateful city, occasioned a general uneasiness and alarm. At the triumphal entry of the Son of David, the whole city was in commotion ; the priests and pharisees were agitated by fear, jealousy, and rage ; only a few simple and pious souls went forth to meet him, and formed a harmless triumph by their acclamations of joy, and by the palm-branches which they strewed before him to adorn his entrance.

In the same manner is the Lord received by Christians at the present time. From the beginning of this holy season, the Church has incessantly admonished you that the King of Glory would come, and be himself your passover. On this day, in order to inflame your ardour, she announces that he is near at hand : *tell ye the daughters of Sion, behold thy King cometh.* But, my beloved, what are the impres-

sions which these happy tidings create in your souls? Are they impressions of fear and sadness? Are you sorrowful at the thought of your Easter duty? These, at least, are the impressions which are made on the generality of Christians. A few pious souls only will welcome him with salutations of gladness and love.—The law, however, is obligatory on all. Every one is summoned, and commanded to go forth to meet him; and, probably, not an individual in this assembly will refuse to obey.—What, therefore, are your dispositions? This is a question of the utmost importance; for on them depends the worthy reception, or the profanation of the most tremendous mysteries of the Deity. This, I say, is a question of the utmost importance, and I entreat you, as you value your salvation, not only to favour me with your attention, but to endeavour with the utmost solicitude to acquire the

dispositions for a worthy communion, which will be displayed before you in this discourse.

Let a man prove himself, says the apostle, *and so let him eat of that bread*, (1 Cor. xi. 23.); or in other words, let a man prove himself, and examine, first, whether he be truly converted from the error of his ways; secondly, whether he has reduced his passions into subjection, and commenced a course of penitential atonement; thirdly, whether he be animated with an ardent and sincere desire of being united to Jesus Christ in the holy communion.—This is the triple proof, by which alone the Christian can certify whether he be properly disposed to receive his Lord at the approaching solemnity.

1. In the first place, therefore, my beloved brethren, have you given proof that you are truly and sincerely determined to forsake the ways of iniquity?

This is an indispensable point. If you are not thus disposed, you still continue in the shades of sin and death, and consequently the table of the Lord is forbidden you ; for the holy communion is the bread of life ; the soul must be alive in the sight of God, in order to be capacitated to receive it ;—it is the table of the children of God, his enemies are strictly charged not to approach it ;—it is the precious pearl mentioned in the gospel, it must not be cast before the unclean.—

Question yourselves, my beloved, on this subject. Examine the state of your souls. Have you removed every defilement of sin ? Are you truly penitent and contrite ? Is it probable that your reformation will be permanent and complete ?

In order to proceed regularly in this investigation, let us enter into particulars. I will suppose that you have scrutinized the affections of your hearts

in their inmost recesses, and that you have made an entire confession of all your sins: but have you reduced your passions into order? have you renounced your criminal habits?—I will suppose that you were regularly absolved by your director; but was the absolution ratified in heaven? Were you truly justified? With what sentiments were you animated? Did you feel the fervour of compunction and sorrow? Were you sincerely desirous of atoning for the past? Did you form real and effective resolutions to begin a new life? Had you determined on proper expedients for breaking off your criminal engagements, and removing yourselves from the occasions of sin? Had you planned in your mind the duties, the occupations, the connections, the whole detail of the moral conduct which ought to be embraced in order to ensure your perseverance? These are the cares, these are the soli-

citudes, which, for a length of time beforehand, engross the whole attention of the man who is sincerely resolved on a change of life. By this you may know whether the conclusion of your dissipated life is at hand ; and whether our Lord, when he enters the house of your souls, will address you, as he formerly addressed Zacheus, with these words : *This day salvation is come to this house*, Luke xix. 9.

But is this the description of your state? Ah ! perhaps there is reason to apprehend that your disorders maintained their influence in your souls to the very day of your repentance ; that hardly any interval existed between your iniquities and the confession of them ; that, after communion, you will return to your former ways ; that you will take no greater precautions against sin than you did before ; that your illicit connections will continue ; and that your tepidity, your spirit of

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detraction and immortification, will be as prevalent as ever.—This is what too many have always hitherto experienced after the paschal solemnity. And if you have experienced the same, can you suppose that you succeeded, and succeeded so repeatedly, in perfecting the great work of justification, during that short period which intervened between your former crimes and your relapses? and that you approached to the altar with that penitent heart, that purity of soul, which is required for a worthy participation of the Lamb?

No: my beloved friends, whoever you may be: instead of eating the bread of life, you ate and drank your own condemnation. Good God! can any rational Christian entertain the idea, even for an instant, that these certain and immediate returns to the vomit, this incongruous mixture of sacred and profane, do not disqualify the

soul for the reception of the tremendous mysteries?——It is not my intention to insinuate that the worthy participation of the holy Eucharist invariably establishes the soul in a permanent state of justice: this privilege belongs not to the inhabitants of the earth, but to the pure spirits in the heavenly Jerusalem. The life of man is a continual temptation; the most holy are not free from danger; no one stands so firm, but he has reason to tremble lest he fall. But I mean to say, that it is absolutely required, that, after the remedy of penance, you should not appear infected with the same disorders; and that your cure should be, if not entirely, at least almost complete. I mean to say, with St. Chrysostom, that it is absolutely required, that when you leave the altar, you should resist with a firmer resolution the allurements of flesh and blood; that you should avoid with greater care the occasions of sin; and that the

blood of the covenant should infuse into your hearts and souls the sentiments and the inclinations of Jesus : in a word, that your communion should not be the business only of a day.

He who eateth my flesh, says our Saviour, *abideth in me, and I in him,* John vi. 57. He does not say, he *uniteth* himself to me, *but he abideth in me ;* and in the same manner, he does not say, I *unite* myself to him, but *I abide in him* : as much as to say, I form in his heart a fixed, solid, and permanent abode ; I make with him a firm and constant alliance. Whence St. Augustin concludes, that the Christian who receives Jesus Christ, and, instead of abiding in him, quickly expels him from his heart by sin, has not spiritually, that is worthily, received his Lord, but has eaten and drunk his own condemnation.

A worthy communion, my beloved brethren, enriches the heart with so

many graces, unites it to Jesus in a manner so intimate and ineffable, invigorates it with such strength and courage; that the soul is enabled to advance for a length of time in the paths of salvation, and is, in some degree, rendered incapable of frustrating in an instant the good effects produced by the most powerful remedy of religion, and of falling back immediately into the most shameful weaknesses that can disgrace a Christian.

Look, therefore, into the state of your souls, and ascertain whether your communions have been profanations or not. The process is easy: you have only to examine their fruits. What change did they operate in your interior? What was your subsequent mode of life? Holy and profitable communions are never received by the man whose morals are uniformly worldly and profane. As long, therefore, as you continued to indulge the same

passions, and to adhere to the same criminal engagements ; as long as you were addicted to the same failings after communion as you were before, so long, you have too much reason to fear, that you were deficient in your preparation, and that your communions were sacrilegious in the sight of God.

2. From this short view of the subject, you will be convinced that confession is not the only proof of a reform of life, which the law requires. The minister who rashly absolves habitual sinners, exceeds his commission ; for his delegated powers extend only over the truly contrite : his sentence will not be ratified in heaven ; or rather, his sentence will be reversed, and your condemnation will be pronounced in heaven, instead of your pardon : the blood of the Lamb, which he pours on your head, will cry to heaven for vengeance ; you will receive the stroke of death from the hand that was stretched

out to save you from destruction.—

The pastor, therefore, is authorised and required to exact proofs of the sincerity of your protestations, (if your protestations have hitherto been without effect,) before he admits you to the sacraments, and to certify whether you have renounced the occasions of sin, whether you are for ever divorced from the objects of your passions, and whether you have commenced the course of penitential atonement for your former offences.

According to the ancient discipline of the Church, the notorious sinner was not allowed to receive the holy communion until he had devoted whole years to the painful works of humiliation, fasting, and prayer : the Eucharist was the bread of life, which the sinner ate, as it were, in the sweat of his brow. And can you suppose, that, because the Church has consented, for prudential reasons, to the abolition of this point of discipline, can you sup-

pose that to confess your inveterate crimes, is to atone for them, and that the purity of soul which is required in the worthy communicant, is attained by the bare exposure of the malignity and infection of his spiritual sores? Ah! my friends, the law of God can never be abrogated by custom: the Church, indeed, may dispense with public proofs, but she will not, she cannot dispense with private proofs from the sinners of whom I speak: primitive fervour may abate; but the sanctity of the Lord is the same, and the sanctity of the receiver must be the same.

The Church appointed that the forty days of Lent should precede the paschal communion, on purpose that time and opportunity might be given to habitual sinners to weep over their offences, to purify their souls by prayer and fasting, and thus to dispose themselves for a worthy participation of the holy mysteries. By this she indicates, that the necessity still exists of devoting

some time to penance after a sinful life, before we presume to sit down to the banquet of our Lord.

There may, indeed, be exceptions to this rule. It may be sometimes expedient, on account of the lively compunction, and the wonderful conversion of a sinner, or even necessary, on account of the danger which would attend delay, when the penitent, who is sincerely converted, is of a fickle and inconstant disposition, to abridge the time of trial. The laws of the Church are replete with wisdom, charity, and prudence. The salvation of sinners is her only object: and the means which conduce more immediately to that end, are the most conformable to her spirit. But this does not operate against the general rule, namely, that sinners should do penance, and that they should prove themselves, before they eat of this bread.

You, perhaps, may say, that the law

of the Church requires that you communicate within a given time, and that you cannot defer it in order to give proofs of your sincerity. What! do you insinuate by this, that the Church commands you to communicate unworthily? and that she considers a sacrilegious communion as the full accomplishment of the paschal duty? You would, indeed, by such a communion, avoid her censures, because her cognizance extends only to exterior appearances, but you would not avoid the anathemas of heaven, which would witness your concealed profanation.— She commands you to receive at this time, on the supposition that you will approach to the altar with a pure conscience;—on the supposition that you have employed this time of Lent in doing penance for your sins, and in making the necessary preparation for a worthy communion. But if these preparations have been neglected, she

commands that your communion be deferred, and has empowered her ministers to extend the term of the paschal law to a more distant period. The fruits of the sacrament, and the accomplishment of her precept, are not confined to times and seasons, but depend on the innocence and purity of the receiver.

3. If, indeed, you were animated with a supereminent degree of compunction, and with a sincere and ardent desire of being united to your Lord, no delay would be necessary, as I have said above. This your fervent love, which is the third proof required, would excuse your immediate admission to the sacred banquet. But, alas! in what breast does this fervent love reside? The greater part of Christians are uneasy at the approach of this holy time. They loath the bread of life. These days of joy and gladness to the Church, are to them days of melan-

choly and sadness. Like the young man in the gospel, whom our Saviour counselled to sell all he had and follow him, they are sorrowful when they hear the solemn proclamation of the Church summoning them to throw off the defiled garments of sin, and to prepare for the nuptials: and were it not for her threats and anathemas, they would willingly renounce the table of the Lord for ever.

Great God ! is it necessary, then, to drive thy beloved children into thy embraces ! Are their hearts so far estranged from thee, as to be callous to all the attractions of thy infinite love ! Could the primitive Christians have believed that the authority of the Church would ever have been exerted for these purposes ? and that her threats, which in those times were employed only to deter the rebellious and unworthy from daring to partake of her mysteries, would in after ages have

been necessary to prevent her children from entirely forsaking thy holy altar !

Were you animated with the true spirit of Christianity, you would declare that a prohibition from partaking of the body of the Lord, would be the greatest punishment which the Church could inflict: you would declare that life was insupportable without the Blessed Eucharist. Then it would be unnecessary to exhort you to the participation of this sacred food: you would tell me, that in religion there was nothing more consolatory, in virtue nothing more desirable or beneficial. You would tell me, that it was the sweetest soother in affliction, the only comfort in your banishment, the daily remedy for your weaknesses, and the universal reliever of all your wants.

But you say that the holy Eucharist requires such perfect dispositions in the receiver. I grant it. But, my chris-

tian brethren, these dispositions are attained by the frequent participation of it. By its means alone you will be enabled to resist your spiritual enemies, to subdue your passions, and to live a holy life. By its means alone will you be enabled to receive it worthily. One communion ought to be a preparation for the next. The farther you remove yourselves from the holy table, the more will your tepidity increase, the greater strength will your passions acquire, and the more will both the reign of Jesus be weakened in your hearts, and the man of sin be established and fortified. Be not deterred, therefore, by a plea which is not the offspring of humility, but the child of sloth. Fly to the altar on the wings of love. Open your hearts to the sweet attractions of your Jesus ; invite him to take full possession of them, and to make them his abode for ever.

Pour forth your souls before him,

and say with St. Augustin: Lord! who will give me, that I may be for ever united to Thee; that Thou alone mayest possess my affections, and reign without a rival in my soul? Ah! perhaps, Lord, my inward house is not sufficiently adorned for thy reception; but do Thou come; thy presence alone will embellish it. Perhaps thy secret and invisible enemies are not entirely dislodged; but art not thou stronger than the strongest in armour? Thy presence alone will expel them: all will be in peace, when Thou hast taken possession of my heart. Perhaps my soul is as yet defiled with spots and stains, which disfigure her in thy sight: but thy sacred blood will remove every defilement, and Thou wilt renew my youth and my beauty, like that of the eagle. Only come, Lord, and delay not. With Thee I shall possess all things; but without Thee, I shall possess nothing, although surrounded by

all the pleasures and favours which the world can bestow.

Are these, my beloved friends, the holy sentiments of eagerness and impatience, which lead the greater number of you to the table of the Lord? Ah! if the Church left you at full liberty to communicate or not, the table of the Lord would be abandoned at this holy time; very small indeed would be the number of true disciples, who, with repentance and love, would keep the Pasch with their divine Master.

My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities, says the Lord, by the mouth of his prophet; *they are become troublesome to me, I am weary of bearing them*, Isa. i. 14. You behold all the people hastening to the foot of my altar, and partaking of the sacred offerings during the days of this solemn festival. You suppose that the only motive which actuates them, is the

sanctification of my name ; that I am pleased with their incense and sacrifices ; and that these extraordinary acts of homage will induce me to forget their iniquities : but you are deceived. They are a perverse race ; they have put no difference between what is impure, and what is holy ; and so far from being glorified, *I was profaned in the midst of them*, Ezek. xxii. 26. Adulterers, fornicators, the slaves of hatred, animosity, revenge, rapine, and calumny, appear with confidence in the holy place. The hands, which you behold extended towards my throne, are filled with abominations ; and their sacrifices pollute the sanctity of my eyes, when I look down upon them.

Be on your guard, my beloved brethren, and profit by the experience of others. Prove yourselves, before you presume to appear before the altar of God. Be animated with the pure sen-

timents of compunction and love. Put on the new man, and take precautions that Jesus Christ enter not your souls in vain. Preserve the holy treasure, after you have received it; and guard it, I do admonish you, carefully against the enemies of your salvation, who will then redouble their efforts to wrest it from you. Make yourselves worthy to become the temple and the abode of God, who is about to incorporate himself with you; and do not fill up the measure of your iniquities, in a place where you may find a plentiful source of grace, and a pledge of immortality.

GOOD FRIDAY.

ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

It is consummated. . . . John xix. 30.

THESE were the memorable words of our blessed Saviour, when he consummated the great sacrifice of man's redemption on the cross: these the last breathings of his pious soul before its temporary separation from the body; this his last declaration to his faithful followers.

How these words were understood by those who surrounded him at the moment, is not said; but the melancholy reflections which overwhelmed the minds of his apostles, when they

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understood that He, in whom they trusted as their great Deliverer, was no longer to be sought for among the living, must have been painful indeed. Perhaps the dreadful prodigies which succeeded—the preternatural eclipse of the sun,—the trembling of the earth,—the resurrection of the dead,—and the confusion of all nature, encouraged the idea that the universal dissolution was, at hand,—that the world could not survive the death of its Maker,—and that the outrage offered to his divine person could not be expiated by any thing less than the destruction of the whole creation. This, perhaps, was confirmed by the recollection of his former words respecting the near approach of the last day, and of the final consummation of all.

But the testimony of faith has declared, that on that great day of retribution, the Son of Man, instead of appearing in the garb of humility, loaded

with ignominy, and nailed to the cross, will be seated on a cloud of glory, surrounded by legions of angels, and preceded by the ensigns of power, terror, and majesty. Let us, therefore, examine the mysterious import of these his last words : they are instructive, and explain the whole mystery of the cross.

In the first place, our Lord frequently declared, by the ministry of his prophets, that the Jewish sacrifices were imperfect ; that they suspended his judgments, but did not satisfy his justice : and that they were accepted merely because they prefigured the great sacrifice of his Son, by which every deficiency was to be filled up. His death, therefore, consummates the measure of atonement which was due to the divine justice.

In the second place, Jerusalem had not filled up the number of her crimes. She had as yet only put to death the en-

voys and prophets that were sent to her : it remained that she should put to death the Son and Heir likewise, in order that the measure of the iniquity of her ungrateful children might be consummated.

Lastly, testimonies of an infinite love had not been given to God, in return for that infinite love which he entertains for man. Such testimonies could not be given by any created being : for this reason, he himself descended from heaven, and by the voluntary sacrifice of his life gave testimonies of love equal to that of his Father.

By these words, therefore, Jesus intimates that he has consummated the satisfaction due to the justice of his Father, that man has consummated his ingratitude, and that he has consummated his love. The contemplation of these mysteries will open an extensive field for pious reflections,

and will display before our eyes truths, which are concealed from the world, because the world is a stranger to the mystery of the cross.

1. God would neither be wise, nor holy, nor just, nor even good, says St. Augustin, were he to suffer sin to go unpunished. His *glory* requires that he should vindicate his injured honour. His *wisdom* requires that he should re-establish order, which had been violated by sin. His *goodness* requires that, by due punishment, he should stem the torrent of wickedness, which would be extended beyond all limits by impunity. His *sanctity* requires that he should no longer communicate himself to the unworthy, but abandon them to wretchedness and woe. In a word, every attribute of the Divinity demands the punishment of sin.

But his justice, which in a particular manner calls for the punishment of

the sinner, could not be satisfied by any atonement that the sinner could offer: the victim was not worthy of him: man could offend him, but his powers were not adequate to repair the offence. It was necessary that a more noble victim should be substituted; that the heavens should open, and rain down the Just One,—the Lord,—and the Saviour; that He, who alone could restore to the Deity the honour of which he had been deprived by the revolt of the sinner, should humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This was the great design of the wisdom and goodness of God in the sacrifice which is offered up by his only Son, on this day, for the redemption of the world.

The evils which sin had occasioned were manifold. It had corrupted the mind of man, and caused it to love those things which were forbidden:—

it had corrupted the heart, and caused it to rebel against the law, and refuse submission to the will of its Maker:— it had corrupted the senses, and enabled them to subject to their commands that reason, to which they ought to have been subjected. These were the evils occasioned by sin; and these evils are remedied and expiated by our Divine Saviour in the garden of Olives the night preceding his passion. The exposition of the history of this great event will display these points in the clearest light.

In the first place, the sufferings of mind which our Saviour endured in this first stage of his passion, are proportionate to the evil which sin had caused in the mind of man.—The hour being come, when our Lord was to leave this world, and return to the Father, after having imparted to his disciples the last testimony of his love in the institution of the Christian Pass.

over, he goes forth attended by his disciples:—like a victim, he advances cheerfully and voluntarily to the place of sacrifice. He goes into the garden of Olives, there to offer himself for the last time to all the wills of his heavenly Father. His disciples are too weak to witness his sufferings on this occasion: he, therefore, retires to a small distance, and, prostrating himself on the ground, receives from the hands of his Father the bitter chalice of his passion.

No sooner is the bloody ministry of our reconciliation accepted of by him, than he is treated by the justice of his Father as the victim of sin,—the holocaust of expiation, loaded with the iniquities of the whole world. His pure soul instantly feels the weight of the wrath of God. He beholds the monster sin in all its horrors; in all its malice and deformity: he beholds its dismal effects, death, and perdition, and

ignorance, and pride, and the universal corruption of the world : he beholds the sins of all mankind,—the infidelities of the Jews, and the abominations of the Gentiles ;—the sins of former times, and the sins of latter times : he beholds the heresies, schisms, and dissensions, which were to tear thousands from his embraces : he beholds the profanations of his altars, the sacrilegious abuses of his sacraments, the almost universal extinction of faith and charity ; and, in short, every crime which would be committed by his chosen people,—the members of his mystical body,—and the dearest objects of his love.

What a spectacle, my beloved, is this ! Who can express or conceive the tortures which he endures on this occasion ! With what horror and detestation does he cast his eyes over this enormous heap of abominations ! He cannot endure the sight : he is over-

powered: he is sorrowful even unto death. Willingly would he turn away his eyes; but the inexorable justice of his Father will not consent: he must behold it: he must contemplate it.—What a trial was this to him, who was meek and humble of heart;—to him, who was purity and innocence itself!

Pause a moment, my brethren, and behold the effects which are caused by the undisguised exposure of the guilt of sin in the mind of your agonizing Jesus. You are summoned at this time to take a view of your own transgressions, and to bewail them in the presence of your offended Maker. Fix your eyes, therefore, on Jesus: he exhibits in his agony a perfect model of repentance. He is sorrowful even unto death: he falls prostrate on the ground: he cannot endure the sight of sin: the excess of his agony forces from his body drops as it were of blood. It is not, indeed, expected

that the same effects should be produced in your minds ; but it is required that you should be troubled at the sight of sin ; that you should view it in the light of faith ; that you should hate it above all other evils ; and that you should be determined to submit to sufferings and privations of every kind, rather than incur its odious guilt any more.

In addition to these sufferings of mind, our Lord is subjected to humiliations in order to remedy the second evil occasioned by sin, namely, the corruption of the heart, and its opposition to the will and law of God.—

He is humbled, in the first place, before his disciples. His constancy seems to forsake him at the sight of death : He, who had so frequently encouraged them to suffer with resolution and patience, is constrained to acknowledge before them his own fears and alarms : he even implores their aid,

and conjures them not to forsake him in the midst of his anguish. Thus is our Lord, not only loaded with the weight of our sins, but obliged to endure the confusion and shame attendant on guilt.

He is humbled in the second place, by being necessitated to accept of the consolatory assistance of an angel. So totally were the powers of his body exhausted, and such deep impressions had the terrors of death made on his mind, that an angel was sent from heaven to comfort, to strengthen, and assist him. He, who a short time before was honoured and adored by the whole heavenly court, is now, as it were, placed below the rank of his own creatures: He who upholds the universe, is not able to uphold himself; his strength is gone, and he falls pale, trembling, and convulsed, into the arms of one who received his being and strength from him.

He is humbled again by the unfriendly indifference of his disciples. His sufferings do not seem to make any impression on their feelings : while he is struggling almost in the agonies of death, they fall asleep : he is obliged even to reprove them for their drowsiness and sloth : *What ! cannot you watch one hour with me ?* He suffers alone : every one, even his dear disciples, seem to declare against him, and take part with the justice of his Father. — How nice are we, my beloved, respecting the behaviour of our friends ! the least coolness on their parts, the least want of attention is severely felt by us. Let us learn, from the sufferings of Jesus, to expect nothing from creatures, and not to complain if our benefits are repaid with nothing but ingratitude. These are the humiliations of our Saviour in his agony : but the third evil of sin, namely, the evil of sensuality, is still to be expiated, and

therefore the excruciating torture of mind which is occasioned by the foresight of his approaching passion, is added to the number of his sufferings in the garden. Ah ! my beloved, the foresight of an impending and inevitable punishment is frequently more painful than the punishment itself. Our blessed Jesus experienced it. At this moment the clear and distinct view of every stage of his passion is expanded before him : every stripe,—every affront,—every pang which he is to endure afterwards in rotation, rush suddenly on his mind : he endures all at once. Oh ! the torture is too great : his soul is overpowered : he entreats his Father *that the chalice might pass from him* : he recalls his prayer ; *not my will, but thine be done* : he falls into an agony, and drops of blood issue forth from every pore.

So inexorably, my beloved, does a God, who is infinitely good, chastise

his beloved Son on account of our sins. What an inducement is here for us to commence with cheerfulness, and without delay, the arduous work of repentance, and to devote the remainder of our lives to the great duty of expiating the crimes which we have already committed! But, alas! how many are there who, instead of being excited to commence a life of penance, make the sufferings of our Saviour the pretext for leading a life of indolence and pleasure? Who say, that as their ransom is now paid, works of penance are neither requisite nor meritorious? Oh! my blessed Jesus! thou, therefore, hast been a man of sorrows, only that we might be men of pleasure! No: christian brethren, this cannot be said. Jesus has suffered *for* us, but not to exempt us from suffering. He has suffered, in order that our sufferings might be available to salvation. By sacrificing his life, he has disposed the justice of God to ac-

cept our weak sacrifice of penance. His sufferings have stamped a value on ours, and made them acceptable to the Deity.

2. Thus did the Lamb of God endure the disquietude, the humiliations, and the chastisements due to sin : thus was the justice of his Father consummated. We will proceed in the painful narration, and describe the consummation of ingratitude and malignity on the part of man. There are many points for our consideration ; namely, the weakness or perfidy of his disciples,—the iniquity of the priests and ancients,—the inconstancy of the people,—the timidity of Pilate,—and the inhumanity of his executioners : in all of which you will discover that ingratitude and malice were extended to the utmost limits of possibility.

The first subject for our consideration is the weakness or perfidy of his disciples, by one of whom he is be-

trayed, and by the others abandoned. No sooner is our Lord recovered from his agony, than *behold Judas, one of the twelve, comes into the garden, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests, and ancients of the people, Matt. xxvi. 47.* Ah ! who could have conceived it possible that a disciple of Jesus, — an apostle, — an intimate companion, — a bosom friend, — a witness of his innocence, sanctity, and miracles, — and admitted to the sacred banquet of his last supper, would appear at the head of his executioners, and form the plan for his destruction ! What a pang was felt by our blessed Lord on this occasion ! But pause a moment, and reflect on the treachery of this perfidious disciple. He does not openly avow his intention, by seizing at once on the person of his Master : he conceals his malicious design under the mask of friendship : he gives him a kiss ; — a

kiss, more piercing, says St. Leo, to the tender heart of Jesus, than the spear which pierced his side.—But in what manner is his salutation received? *Friend*, says Jesus, *for what art thou come?* As if he had said: “Notwithstanding thy perfidy, I will still speak to thee as a friend: there is yet time for repentance: I am willing to pardon thee.” O words of clemency and love! What heart could have withstood their power? What breast could have refrained from heaving with sighs of confusion and love? Who would not have thrown himself at the feet of this innocent Lamb of God, and with floods of tears implored the forgiveness of his crime?

And yet, how many imitators of his example will there be during this time of Easter? How many will present themselves at his banquet with hearts devoted to the world, and enslaved to sin! How many will give him the kiss

of peace at his holy table, through no other motive, than because they are driven to it by the severe threats of the Church ! How many will there be, to whom our Lord will address the reproof which he addressed to Judas : “ *Perfidious wretches ! will you betray the Son of Man with a kiss ?* Will you repay my benefits with ingratitude, and dare to insult me by the means of that very sacrament, which is, in a peculiar manner, the pledge of the excess of my love towards you ?”

Now is the Saviour of the world delivered into the hands of sinners ; and here begins the public history of his sufferings. He is immediately seized, bound, and dragged away like a malefactor. Peter prepares to defend him : but our Lord commands him to desist ; and by this prohibition informs us that the arms, which he bequeaths to his Church, are spiritual arms,—the arms of patience, prayer,

and sanctity : that his doctrine is to be extended and upheld by charity, meekness, and humility ; and that the sword, which he places in her hands, is intended for the destruction of sin, but not of the sinner.—Thus we see that Peter's interference was of short duration. An indiscreet zeal, guided by passion, is never of long continuance.—He begins to follow his Master at a distance : a sure presage of a speedy fall. The man, who follows Jesus at a distance, will not follow him long. This the unhappy Peter experiences. A simple question makes him a perjurer and an apostate. He thrice denies that he is a disciple of Jesus, even in the presence of Jesus himself. Good God ! what a fall ! Peter—the chief pastor—the pillar of the Church—the apostle of the circumcision, even Peter denies his Lord !

Jesus, however, does not exclude him for ever from his love. Although

surrounded by relentless enemies, and deafened by the clamours of the multitude, and the vociferations of those who demand his death, he casts an eye of pity on his unfaithful disciple, and by the interior workings of his grace sends him forth from the wicked company into which he had imprudently entered, to efface his guilt in private by the tears of sincere repentance.

We, my brethren, have been frequently made partakers of the same graces. The Lord has repeatedly exposed before our eyes the enormity of our sins, and secretly invited us to go forth from the company of our passions and vices, and weep over the infidelities of which we have been guilty. But have we hitherto duly corresponded with these graces? Have we not rather turned our backs upon him, and renewed our treason almost immediately after we had effected our reconciliation

with him? Oh! let us tremble, lest, instead of extending the same mercy to us again, he should forsake us, as he did Judas, and leave us, like him, to die in our sins.

Judas, says the gospel, seeing that Jesus was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver, and in despair went, and hanged himself with a halter. This was a convincing proof of our Lord's innocence, and ought to have weighed powerfully on the minds of his accusers. But we are now to witness the consummation of iniquity in the priests and doctors of the law. This convincing proof makes no impression on them. They witness the repentance, they witness the despair of a man, who could not possibly be induced by any other consideration to acknowledge his guilt, than the force of truth; and yet their only reply is: *Look thou to it.* — They had before heard the doctrine

of Jesus, and witnessed his miracles: they had seen prodigies and wonders wrought by him, which had never been wrought before: and now they behold Judas repentant, despairing, and dying; and yet they are not moved. So true it is, that the continual abuse of the graces of God brings on that hardness of heart, which too frequently leads to final impenitence.— Be upon your guard, my brethren. You are as yet strangers to this hardness of heart. You cannot witness the sudden death of a sinner; you cannot hearken to the severe truths of the gospel; you cannot behold an extraordinary conversion, without being sensibly affected. But although your hearts are not hardened at the present moment, is there not reason to fear that they will be hardened at no very distant period? Have none of you so far stifled the remorse of conscience,— are none of you so indifferent to the

danger of death, as to live on for a considerable time in the state of sin? Do none of you perform your duties to God with a kind of disgust? and are none of you disposed to omit the most essential obligations of religion on the most trifling excuses? I hope there are none. But if there are, truth requires me to declare that they are hastening to that dreadful state of obduracy, which we so much reprobate in the Jewish priests.

In the second place, the high-priest, astonished at the silence of Jesus under all the accusations brought against him, and perhaps discovering something more than human in the patience, meekness, and dignity of his deportment, at length exclaims: *I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.* But, in proposing this question, he is not influenced by the love of truth; his only desire is to en-

snare our Saviour in his speech, to draw a full confession from his own mouth, in order that he might destroy him according to the forms of law.

Our Lord, nevertheless, out of respect to his Father's name, and to give us to understand that we are not to be deterred from giving testimony to the truth by the passions and prejudices of men, however serious may be the consequences, nor to wait till people are prepared to profit by it, openly proclaims that he is the Christ foretold by the prophets, and that they should hereafter see him sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

This solemn confession, so far from mitigating the fury of his judge, contributes to hasten the sentence of his condemnation. The high-priest rends his garments, and exclaims, *Blasphemy*; and they all declare him wor-

thy of death. Not a single friend speaks in his behalf.

With what submission, my divine Jesus, dost thou bow down to this iniquitous sentence ! Thou dost not complain of injustice : thou knowest that it is the will of thy Father, and therefore thou receivest it in silence, like a lamb destined for the slaughter.

From this example of our Saviour, let us learn to submit without complaint to the injuries we receive from our fellow creatures. They, whom we call our enemies, are the ministers of God's justice upon us, and, as it were, the channels through which the choicest gifts of heaven are conveyed to our souls. Let us not, therefore, harbour any resentment against the hand that strikes, nor against the tongue that calumniates us : but let us fix our eyes solely on the wise and merciful designs of Providence, which by the means

of these men is promoting our salvation.

But let us proceed, and we shall behold the consummation of the malice of man in the inconstancy of the multitude, who with loud cries insist on his immediate execution. — Jesus, after having been exposed to the barbarity and brutal insolence of the servants and ministers of the high-priest during the whole night, abandoned by his disciples, and looking forward to the completion of the horrid tragedy at the return of day, is now hurried from the house of Caiphas to the pretorium of Pilate, through the streets of the ungrateful Jerusalem, followed by a lawless mob with shouts and cries, insulted by all, and defended by none. Oh ! what a change is here ! A few days ago, we beheld him triumphantly entering into Jerusalem, like a conqueror taking possession of his kingdom,

amidst the acclamations of the multitude : to-day he is execrated by this same multitude, and loaded with every species of ignominy and reproach. So inexorable is the justice of his Father, and so fickle and inconstant is the world.

But behold the extremes ; and first, the injustice into which these infatuated men are hurried by their blindness. Pilate, in compliance with the ancient annual custom of releasing to them a criminal at the time of the Passover, proposes for their choice Jesus on the one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious malefactor on the other. What a parallel ! The Saviour of the world placed on a level with a thief and a murderer ! And yet Barabbas is preferred ; and preferred by universal acclamation ! by the priests,—the elders—the doctors,—the multitude ! before the tribunal of a heathen judge, and in the presence of



the whole nation of the Jews, assembled at Jerusalem on account of the pass-over !

Ah ! my beloved, we are shocked at the inconstancy and wickedness of this stiff-necked race ! But let us look into ourselves, and perhaps we shall discover that our iniquity far surpasses that of the Jews ; and that we have preferred before him something more despicable than Barabbas ; even our own passions and self-will, his most odious enemies. If we discover that this crime is imputable to us, let us fix our eyes on the meekness of the Lamb of God under this unmerited humiliation, and let us submit with the same evenness of temper to the humiliations which we may receive from our fellow-creatures. They will not come undeserved.

Secondly, behold the fury and madness of these infatuated Jews. Pilate, a heathen magistrate, refuses to pro-

ceed farther in the business ; he washes his hands in the presence of them all, and declares that he is innocent of the blood of that Just Man. But the Jews exclaim with great vehemence : *Let his blood be upon us, and upon our children*, Matt. xxvii. 25. The event has demonstrated that their petition was granted. They are to this day the outcasts of the universe,—vagrants and fugitives ;—without altar, —without sacrifice. They bear on their foreheads the marks of the innocent blood, which their forefathers so unjustly spilled, and of the curse, which this horrid deed of theirs has ever since entailed on them.

Thus, we see, it is in the power of parents, and it is much too often their crime and their misfortune, to entail the most dreadful maledictions on their families and their posterity. God visiteth the iniquities of parents on their children even to the third and fourth

generation; and to no other cause than this may be attributed the total extinction of many families, which have been swept off, as it were by an invisible hand, from the face of the earth, without so much as a single vestige of them remaining.

Thirdly, behold the ingratitude of his persecutors. These same men, who a short time before had received so many benefits from our Lord, as to form the resolution of making him their King, now declare that they *have no king but Cæsar*, John xix. 15. They reject the Son of David, whose reign was to be eternal, and they *will not that he reign over them*, Luke xix. 14.

Perhaps, my beloved, it may be found, on examination, that we have frequently imitated the ingratitude of the Jews. In our fits of devotion, when we presented ourselves at the holy table, we invited Jesus to come; and be the King of our hearts:.

E 4.

"Come, my dear Jesus," we said,
"take full possession of my heart, and
"make it forever a servant of thy love."

These were our words, and probably our desires, when we prepared ourselves for this act of religion. But how long did we continue in the same sentiments? Did we not, like too many others, turn our backs upon him almost immediately after we had partaken of his blessings, and declare, if not by words, ~~at~~ least by our actions, *that we would not have this man reign over us, and that we would have no king but Cæsar*, that is, our pleasures and passions?

But let us proceed, and you will behold the malignity of man consummated in Pilate, who acts in direct opposition to the dictates of his conscience, and condemns the innocent. In the first place, this weak and timid governor acknowledges that he is not capable of forming a judgment on the

nature of the accusation brought forward against our Lord ; that he is unacquainted with the Jewish law, and that the cause before him seems to require that it should be submitted to the decision of the high-priest and sanhedrim. Nevertheless, the fear of giving offence to the Jews impels him to proceed without authority, and without a competent knowledge, and, at length, to pronounce the fatal sentence.—Secondly, the apprehension of losing the favour of his prince operates more powerfully on his mind than the dread of committing an act of injustice, and shedding innocent blood.—Thirdly, he applies to the enemies of our Lord for information respecting his pretended crimes : and although he is convinced that the tumultuous clamours of a mob are of no weight in a court of judicature, he nevertheless determines to prefer his own interest to the rights of justice, and in his own mind

pronounces that it is better that one man should die, than that the whole people should revolt from the authority of Cæsar, under his administration.—Fourthly, he interrogates Jesus himself: he is struck with his replies: he publicly declares to the people that he is guilty of no crime, and yet he does not set him at liberty.—Fifthly, terrified by the dreams of his wife, he endeavours to extricate himself by sending our Lord to Herod under pretence that he is a Galilean, although he had too much reason to suppose that Jesus would not meet with any protectors in the court of that prince; who would be disposed to take up the cause, and procure his discharge. The humiliations and insults to which our Lord was exposed by this unworthy expedient of Pilate are not to be conceived. But instead of listening to the scoffs and derisions of that haughty tyrant, and his court, let us return with our

Lord to the pretorium of Pilate, and behold the consummation of the malignity of men in the cruelty of the soldiers.

Pilate, convinced more and more of the innocence of our Lord, and terrified more and more by the fury of the populace, at length condemns him to the most painful and most ignominious punishment of being scourged. Now is he delivered into the hands of the military. Let your reflections accompany my words. I wish, not so much to excite your compassion, as to induce you to turn to yourselves, and calculate the degree of punishment which your sins have deserved. The bloody executioners seize on their prey, and bind him naked to the pillar. They discharge on his tender body innumerable lashes. They glut their barbarity with his sacred blood. At length they loosen him from the pillar; they throw a purple garment over his shoulders; they

put a reed into his hands ; they press a crown of sharp thorns on his head, and having thus arrayed him as a mock king, they kneel down before him in derision. But let us turn away our eyes : let us not behold the inhuman blows which they discharge on his bleeding head, nor the filthy phlegm with which they cover his face—that face, which the angels behold with trembling, and which kings and prophets earnestly desired to see, and could not.

Meanwhile, the inhuman badge of royalty, with which he is crowned, pierces deep into his sacred head ; the blood trickles down his face on every side : his heavenly features are extinct ; and his countenance is ghastly beyond description. In this frightful state Pilate exhibits him to the people with these words, *Behold the man.* Oh ! my beloved, is this the Saviour—the Emmanuel—the Holy One—the Desired

of all nations ! Do you recognise him with these hideous—these mangled features ? Fix your eyes upon him : *behold the man*. Ah ! he is divested of all his beauty and comeliness : he is reduced to the lowest degree of infamy and shame : but he is not divested of his divinity. These are sufferings which he endures for your sins. *Behold, therefore, the man* : behold the barbarous tragedy, which you renew as often as you consent to sin : behold the sacred body which you defile, as often as you defile your own : behold the sacred head which you pierce, as often as you transgress the bounds of duty.—Oh ! can you remain unmoved at this spectacle ? One would think, says St. Augustine, that human wickedness was extended to its utmost limits by these unhappy wretches who nailed our Lord to the cross : but it is extended still further by Christians who frustrate the effects of his passion by

their sins : because they despise the Lord in his glory, whom the Jews despised only when he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity : and because they crucify their Lord after he had risen to become immortal and impassible.

3. I will not wound your feelings by entering into a description of the excruciating tortures of our Lord during the last stage of his passion : but as I have described the consummation of the justice of his Father, and of the malice of men, I will now describe the consummation of his love for us in the concluding scene of our redemption.—It is not the perfidy of a false disciple, it is not the envy of the priests, the inconstancy of the people, the timidity of Pilate, nor the cruelty of the executioners that nails our Lord to the cross ; it is his love alone. He delivers himself for us, says the apostle, out of pure love : if he had

not loved us, in vain would all the powers of earth and hell have conspired to take away his life.

Jesus having loved his own, says the gospel, he loved them to the end. John xiii. 1. Like a tender father, his paternal affection increases the nearer he approaches to the time when he is to be separated from them.

His love is disinterested. He is careful that not one of his disciples shall be involved in his sufferings: he will not allow them to weep over him: and so great is his affection and solicitude even for the ungrateful Jerusalem, that he is more affected by the foresight of the evils with which that unhappy city is to be visited, than by the dread of the cruel death which he himself is about to suffer. *Daughters of Jerusalem, says he, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the day will come,*

wherein they will say: blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the breasts that have not given suck:—for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry. Luke xxiii. 28. Attend to the words of your Saviour. He exhibits himself before you on this day with the cross on his mangled shoulders; he describes, by the voice of his ministers, the history of his passion and death, not indeed with a view of exciting your compassion, but in order to induce you to weep over the disordered state of your souls, and to dread the judgments which await impenitence. “*Weep not for me,*” he says to you, “*but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*” I shall triumph over death; but when will you triumph over that inveterate habit which has so long had dominion over you, and prevented your conversion? I

shall rise in glory from the grave ; but when will you rise from the grave of sin, in which you have been buried for so many years ? Oh ! dread the judgments which hang over your heads : *weep for yourselves, and for your children.* I could easily break asunder my bands, and draw all creatures to myself ; but when will you dissolve the criminal connections which enslave your hearts ? when will you renounce those favourite passions, which age and indulgence have so deeply rooted within you ? Oh ! *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children ; for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry.*

His love is generous. He prays, even in the agonies of death, for the very wretches who are crucifying him. He collects the shattered remains of his strength, in order to excuse their sin, and to solicit their pardon : he

raises his voice, and cries out : *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34. He is ready to wash away their guilt with the very blood that they are spilling : and even on the cross, which they themselves had erected, he is desirous of effecting their reconciliation with his injured Father. With the example of our Redeemer, praying and dying for his enemies, before our eyes, can we refuse to pardon the injuries which we receive from our brethren and fellow creatures ?

His love is triumphant. He gains a disciple even in his last moments. His languishing and dying eyes are still capable of piercing the inmost recesses of the soul. Even in his disgrace, he can exercise his power, and promise kingdoms. He casts a look of mercy on the thief who is suffering by his side, and says, *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* Happy cri-

minal ! Thou reapest the first fruits of his blood. Thou wert not a witness of his miracles ; but thou discoverest in his patience evident marks of his divinity. Sinners, you, in the same manner, are fortunate ; for this is your day likewise. The mercies of the Lord are at your command. The moment of his expiring is your moment. The last sighs, and the first fruits of his passion are intended for you.

Jesus having now finished the great work of our redemption, and consummated all things ; having offered his eternal sacrifice, and fulfilled all the ancient figures and prophecies ; having established his Church, vindicated the honour of his Father, and concluded his ministry, he declares that all is *consummated* : he then bows down his head, and *crying out with a loud voice, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit, he gives up the ghost.* Luke, xxiii.

46, Oh ! my brethren, let not our attention be diverted, at this solemn moment, by the prodigies that accompany the death of the great author of nature : a far more interesting subject presents itself before us. Let us contemplate our Jesus, hanging naked and despised on the cross ; and requiring from us no other return for all these sufferings, than the return of our love and service. He dies that he might save us : he dies instead of us : he dies in time, that we may not die eternally : he dies because he loves us : he dies because we do not love him. Can you, beloved Christians, prescribe any bounds to your sorrow, to your gratitude and love ? Alas ! to what misery hereafter will you not be justly sentenced, if in this life you do not love our Lord Jesus crucified.

The multitude, which had assembled to behold the crucifixion, cry out : *Let*

him descend from the cross, and we will believe in him. Matt. xxvii. 42. But, my brethren, let us address him in words of a different import: let us say; it is because Thou art nailed to the cross; it is because Thou hast preferred this throne of ignominy, where thou couldst be our high priest and victim, to the throne which Thou occupiedst on the right hand of thy Father, that we believe in Thee, that we adore Thee as our Mediator, and that we will devote the remainder of our lives to thy service. Do not descend from thy cross, where alone Thou art our happiness, and our hope: rather draw us up to Thee as Thou hast promised. The greater the indignities and torments which Thou endurest, the stronger is our faith, the firmer is our hope, and the more ardent is our love. Is it possible that such excessive sufferings can be of no avail?

Wilt Thou consent that those souls should perish, whom Thou hast purchased at so dear a rate! No: Thou wouldst not have submitted to such a disgraceful death, hadst Thou not intended that we likewise, by partaking of thy sufferings, should hereafter be made partakers of the glory of thy triumph in a happy immortality.

EASTER-DAY.

ON THE COMMON CAUSES OF RELAPSE.

*Christ rising again from the grave,
dieth now no more; death shall no
more have dominion over him.*

Rom. vi. 9.

THE victory of Jesus on this day over death and sin, ensures to him for ever the price of his sufferings, the fruits of his ministry, the perpetuity of his Church, the fidelity of his disciples, the conquest of the universe, the triumph of the cross, and the salvation of all the nations of the earth.

Never again will he be surrounded with the appendages of mortality:

these he has left behind him in the grave. All that he possessed mortal and earthly, was fastened to the cross : having once died, he dieth now no more. The power which he receives from his Father on this day, will never be taken from him. His new empire will be eternal ; and his glorious and renewed life will be as immortal as the divinity itself.

This, my beloved, is the grand characteristic of the resurrection of our Lord : this is the principal point, which St. Paul proposes to our consideration in the words of my text : *Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more.*

Whence comes it, then, that our resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace at this time, by the participation of the sacred mysteries, is of such short duration ? Whence comes it that our new life is only of an instant ; and that our former passions hardly

wait the conclusion of the solemnity, before they resume their wonted influence?

Let us examine into the reason of this general and deplorable evil: the discovery of the cause will be the discovery of the remedy. You do not persevere in the happy newness of life, which you have attained by the virtue of the sacraments, first, because you pay no attention to the solemn promises which you made at the tribunal of penance; and secondly, because you neglect to make reparations where they are required, — reparations, on which the durability of your new life absolutely depends.

These are the usual causes of your relapses after the conclusion of this solemnity. To these I will call your attention; and may the Holy Ghost enlighten your souls, and enable you to apply the proper remedies to all your spiritual disorders.

1. Christ accomplished, after his resurrection, all the promises which he had previously made to his Father : he glorified him ;—he extended the knowledge of his name over the whole earth ; and he formed a congregation of believers, who were to adore him in spirit and in truth. The promises, which he made to his disciples, he likewise fulfilled. He promised that he would endue them with power from above ; that he would infuse a strength and wisdom into their souls, which the whole world should be unable to withstand ;—and that he would appoint them to be the spiritual judges of life and death. He promised them the conquest of the whole world ;—the keys of heaven and hell ;—the conversion of kings and empires ;—the triumph of the cross ;—the destruction of idols ;—and the universal establishment of the doctrine of salvation. These were truly noble promises. But,

no sooner is he risen, than he begins to accomplish them: and, if the miracle of his resurrection may be said to certify the truth of his promises, it may, likewise, be said, that the accomplishment of his promises is a most decisive proof of the miracle of his resurrection.

Here, then, is a plentiful source of instruction. When we entered upon a new life, by virtue of the sacraments, we made many promises to God. If it be asked, whether we shall fulfil them, what answer will it be proper to give to such a question? Will it be said of us, as of our Saviour, that the miracle of our resurrection has proved the sincerity of our promises; and that the accomplishment of our promises is the most certain testimony of the miracle, and of the reality of our resurrection? Would to God that no other testimony may be given of any individual in this assembly.

But what were our promises? We acknowledged before God the emptiness and vanity of the world; and we engaged to withdraw our affections from it, and to fix them upon him. We confessed the injuries and affronts we had offered to his sacred person, and we promised never to repeat them for the time to come. We declared that we had abused his graces and inspirations; and we promised that we would correspond with them in a proper manner for the future. We took a review of all our failings, and we were determined to correct them. We engaged to strengthen ourselves against future temptations, by a more assiduous attention to prayer, by a more frequent participation of the sacraments, and by more than ordinary works of mortification and penance. Impressed with the most lively sense of the mercies, of the patience, and of the forbearance of God, we made repeated protestations

of fidelity, and we sealed them with our sighs and tears.

These promises, however, have not hitherto (for we have frequently made them during the course of our lives) these promises have not hitherto extended beyond the imagination in which they were formed. Like the specious projects, which amuse the leisure hours of a trifling mind, they pleased us by their novelty. We supposed that we should observe them with ease, because we made them without difficulty; and that we should love the reality, because we loved the idea. Perhaps, indeed, we observed them for a short time: the shame of violating such solemn promises the moment after we had sworn to observe them before the altar of God, perhaps restrained us for a few days. But our fidelity went no farther. By degrees we persuaded ourselves that our resolutions were scruples; that we had im-

posed on ourselves an unnecessary yoke; and that it was weakness of mind to make duties where none existed; that salvation did not depend on minute observances; that the zeal which inspired us was laudable, but that we had a very imperfect knowledge of ourselves, to suppose that it would continue long; that there is no trifling with God; and that the person who attempts too much, is sure to do nothing in the end. Thus were our resolutions forgotten, and our promises broken; and we considered this renewed state of infidelity as a deliverance from a yoke, which was becoming burthensome, and as the recovery of a liberty, of which we had indiscreetly deprived ourselves.

This, my beloved, was the primary cause of all your former relapses; because, in the first place, your resolutions were adapted to the nature of your spiritual disorders, and were

the only specific remedies for effecting their cure. For instance; you made the resolution to devote certain stated times to prayer; and you selected this remedy, because you perceived that, without such an extraordinary aid, your hearts would be overpowered by their depraved appetites, their attachments to the world increased, their piety diminished, and that in the time of temptation they would soon fall away: — you imposed on yourselves additional acts of mortification and penance; and your reason was, because experience had taught you, that, by the unrestrained indulgence of pleasure and self-gratification, your dispositions were more prone to evil, your tepidity augmented, and your desires of being united to God in this world, as well as in the next, either considerably lessened, or totally annihilated. Your other resolutions, in the same manner, were directed

against particular failings, and had all a tendency to effect their cure. These, therefore, being neglected, you were exposed to your former danger, and another fall was the inevitable consequence.

Moreover, by accustoming yourselves to violate your resolutions without scruple, you contract the dangerous habit of acting contrary to the dictates of your own hearts ; you destroy that delicacy of conscience, which is requisite for the support of virtue ; you silence the interior monitor, which incessantly upbraids you for the most trivial faults ; and, by degrees, you break down every barrier both of shame and remorse.

In addition to this, you ought to reflect, that the violation of your promises is a formal contempt of the mercies of God, who inspired you with these desires of working out your salvation : it is a tacit acknowledgment, that the

service of Jesus is irksome to you, and that, in your opinion, the lot of those is preferable who have never been enlightened. Baser ingratitude than this, my brethren, there cannot be. There is something here that is truly shocking to our nature. Such souls as these are an abomination to the Lord ; he vomits them out of his mouth, as the scripture expresses it, (*Rev. iii. 16.*) he casts them far away from him, and abandons them to the error of their ways.

Ah ! my beloved, recall to mind the happy moments, when you were prostrate before the altar of God. What sincere regret did you feel for the past ! What tender protestations did you make of an inviolable fidelity for the time to come ! How often did you declare, that the moment of your repentance was the happiest moment of your lives ! Ungenerous souls, can you forget, after all these appearances of

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sincerity and candour, can you forget the promises which, independently of the respect which is due to the Lord of all, before whom they were made, ought to be treated as sacred, merely on account of the sighs and tears with which they were sealed? You pride yourselves on your fidelity to creatures. Your word of honour is a sufficient inducement to fulfil every promise. You would not on any account forfeit your title to constancy and fidelity, even when your engagements are criminal. And can you be perfidious to your God without a blush? Is uprightness, and a strict adherence to your word of honour, a virtue which you then only neither covet nor admire, when it is given to the Lord of Lords? He formerly complained to his prophet, that the sinner made no distinction between Him and his creatures: here, this is all that I require of you. Behave to God with the same

respect as you behave to man. Make it a point of honour to be in religious concerns, as well as in your worldly transactions, sincere, upright, generous, faithful, and incapable of betraying the obligation and solemnity of your promises. Nothing, certainly, can be more glorious and honourable, than to be faithful to Him, who alone is worthy of our fidelity and love.

Alas ! we rank the violation of the resolutions with which grace inspires us, in the number of trivial faults. Even the regular, the retired Christian, falls daily into these infidelities without scruple. This is the fatal source of all our evils. This is the cause of the diminution of piety, of the loss of grace, and of the anger of God. By this unworthy conduct we grieve the Holy Spirit ; we reject his inspirations ; we resist the testimony of our own conscience ; we make a mockery of God ; and we dig a pit for ourselves. Like

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slender reeds, we are shaken by every wind : like clouds without water, we are incessantly driven out of our course. We contract a habit of inconstancy, and our whole lives become one continual vicissitude of sin and repentance; of tepidity and fervour, of dissipation and retirement. We are always in an uncertain state : we cannot permanently decide either for a life of piety, or a life of sin ; we always flatter ourselves that happiness is to be found in the state in which we are not. In this manner life passes away ; conscience is hardened ; the mercies of God are withdrawn ; eternity approaches ; the decisive moment arrives ; the unsuspecting soul is surprised by death in the midst of these dreadful alternatives. She departs this life before she has declared for whom she lives. She ceases to be, before she has decided to whom she belongs ; and the sentiments of regret and repentance, which imbitter

her last moments, are only, properly speaking, her last act of inconstancy.

2. Our Saviour, in the second place, by his resurrection, removed the scandal which attended his ignominious death ; dispelled the doubts and fears of his disciples ; restored all things to order ; and fully satisfied the justice of his Father. Thus, *having died once, he dieth now no more.*

Our resurrection from the death of sin must be accompanied with the same effects. Complete reparation must be made for our past disloyalties, and the justice of God must be satisfied. But we are defective in this point, as well as in the former ; and to this again, in part, may be attributed our relapses.

After a life of vanity and pleasure, of tepidity and concupiscence, we do not chastise ourselves either by retrenchments or self-denials. When the forty days of Lent are expired, we think no more of penance until the sor-

rowful tidings of the next fast are announced. We descend from the cross at this time ; but, instead of arising to a new life—a life of purity and spiritual joy, we plunge impetuously into the abyss of sensual pleasures and worldly enjoyments. We, perhaps, are sincerely desirous of effecting our deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan : but what are our motives ? because the yoke begins to weigh heavy on our shoulders ;—because the hurry and agitation of the passions are no longer pleasing ;—because the world has lost its attractive charms in our eyes. We, perhaps, would willingly forsake the ways of iniquity : and why ? because the cries of conscience are redoubled, — because eternity approaches,—because death is at hand,—and because the voice of an angry God sounds in our ears. We would gladly embrace a life of virtue : but our only inducement is the pleasure and

the happiness of being free from uneasiness and remorse, and the enjoyment of the sweets of interior tranquillity and peace. We seek ourselves only, in our return to God. We throw off the yoke of concupiscence; but we do not take up the yoke of Christ:—we turn away from the sorrows of guilt, but we refuse to taste the bitter draught of repentance:—we divest ourselves of the ignominy of the old man; but we do not put on the mortification of the new:—we deliver ourselves from the oppression of Egypt; but we do not enter the laborious paths of the desert:—in a word, we forsake the ways of sin, but we have no other object in view, than the pleasure of being sinners, no longer.

In the second place, we neglect to make the reparations which justice demands. Religion enforces the necessity of giving every man his own, of paying our just debts, and of taking

no more than what is our due. If we have transgressed in either of these points, full reparation must be made to the injured party. This is an indispensable duty : but by how few is it observed ! The rich, instead of making satisfaction for the past, continue their oppressions, and increase their debts. The merchant, the tradesman, instead of restoring their former unjust gains, extend their unlawful dealings, and devise new plans of increasing their profits at the expense of honesty. The servant and the workman, instead of atoning for their former neglect, either by restitution, by a redoubled diligence, or by a more scrupulous inspection, linger on in their accustomed indolence, and, perhaps, even continue to repeat their depredations.

Lastly, we neglect to make reparation for the injuries which our neighbours have sustained by the unrestrained liberty with which we have

exposed their failings, and censured their actions. Alas ! we foolishly imagine, that so many calumnies which we have invented, so many malicious conjectures which we have proclaimed as known facts, so many unfounded suspicions which we have secretly spread abroad,—crimes which floods of tears and perpetual silence would hardly atone for ; we foolishly imagine, I say, that no other reparation is required, than to be more on our guard for the time to come, and never to indulge our uncharitable remarks, but in private, and in the society of our select friends. Thus do we confirm the opinion which is so prevalent in the world, that whatever other sacrifices the devout observer of his duties may make, he always reserves the liberty of detraction, in order, as it is said, to make amends for the restraints of piety, by the pleasure of censuring the vices of others.

These, my beloved brethren, are the causes of our hasty relapses after the paschal solemnity. Our conversion, in order to be real, must be entire; if one requisite be wanting—if we neglect to pay the debt of atonement to the justice of God, or of reparation to our injured neighbour, our conversion is counterfeit, and our fall is at hand.

If, therefore, it be your sincere desire to persevere in the service of God, shun the dangerous rocks which I have described. — Ah! my brethren, so exquisite is the happiness of the man who is sincerely united to God;—who has removed the wall of separation which has so long kept him at a distance from Him;—who has thrown himself into the arms of his mercy, after having so long wandered in the painful wilderness of the world;—who has re-established peace and tranquillity in his soul, after having so

long endured the uneasiness and remorse occasioned by sin:—so exquisite is the happiness of the man, who lives for Him alone who made him;—who serves so kind, so beneficent a Master, after having so long borne the yoke of an ungrateful and unjust world;—who loves the only object which can impart happiness to its lovers, after having fixed his heart by turns on a thousand objects, which could neither satisfy his desires, nor fix his inconstancy;—who labours at length for something real and substantial, after having endured so much labour and pain in the pursuit of dreams and shadows:—so exquisite is the happiness of the man, who has returned to his God;—who lives for eternity, after having lived so long for vanity;—who is comforted with the well-founded assurance of a state of felicity in the next world, after being convinced by experience that no happiness can be found

in this ;—who endeavours to save his soul, after having lived as if he had no soul to save :—so exquisite, I say, is his happiness, that, were he possessed of all crowns and sceptres, and of the empire of the whole world, and possessed not God, he would possess nothing ; and were he, like Job, on a dunghill, and possessed his God, he would possess all things, since he would enjoy peace of mind in this life, and assured hopes of immortality in the next.

Great God ! this is the day of thy triumph and glory. Look down with an eye of compassion on this congregation assembled in thy name. Sanctify every individual, I beseech thee. Suffer not thy word to return to thee fruitless. May it this day triumph over all hearts, and draw them to thee. O my God ! reward my labours and my solicitudes : my petition is the same which thou thyself didst present

to thy eternal Father. I have announced thy name and thy truths to those to whom thou didst send me : sanctify them, therefore ; perfect thy work ; and suffer not one of them to perish. Look down with an eye of pity on this nation ; deliver it from the spiritual evils with which it has been so long chastised, and from the temporal judgments which at this instant are impending over it. Extend the empire of thy faith over the whole world, and reduce all mankind into the captivity of thy holy gospel : and, if the petitions of a sinful and unworthy minister can find admittance to thy throne, receive, O God, these effusions of my heart ; and may the secret defilements, which thou discoverest in my soul, be no impediment to the success of my supplication.

EASTER-MONDAY.

ON THE MEANS OF ENSURING OUR
PERSEVERANCE.

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. . . Luke xxiv. 34.

THE mystery of the Resurrection has been always celebrated by the Church with particular solemnity, and as the chief festival of the year, This, says the royal prophet, is the day which the Lord hath made,—a day of jubilation and praise,—a day of honour and glory to the whole community of the elect of God, in heaven and on earth. Now is the scandal of the cross

completely done away, and the mysterious language of the Messiah fully explained. On this day his mission is authenticated, his ministry acknowledged, his promises confirmed, his predictions accomplished, his doctrine justified, and his labours crowned. On this day his trembling disciples are invigorated, their sorrow is turned into joy, their incredulity is removed, the enemies of religion are confounded, and the faith of all nations is finally established. On this day the truth of our mysteries is confirmed, and the Church empowered to arise triumphant with her Deliverer from the grave. On this day the means of attaining immortal bliss are secured to us: the tribulations of the flesh are weakened; the sufferings of our exile are alleviated; and a life truly spiritual is proposed to Christians.

Yes, my beloved, Jesus died to crucify the old man, and he has risen to

perfect the new: he died to deliver slaves, he is risen to teach us the right use of the liberty of holiness: he died to cancel our debts, he is risen to enrich us with his graces: he died to save the guilty, he is risen to instruct, and perfect the just: he died to shut the gates of hell, he is risen to open the gates of heaven: in a word, *he died for our sins, he is risen for our justification*, (Rom. iv. 25.): he is risen to animate us to arise with him at this time, and to teach us the most effectual means of preserving the grace which will accompany our resurrection. These are the benefits, and this is the instructive lesson contained in the mystery of this festival.

We all desire to partake of the mercies of the Lord, and to share in his triumph. We all purpose to arise to a new life, and to effect a reconciliation with our injured God by means of the sacraments. But shall we complete

this great work? This will depend on ourselves. We must follow *the pattern which was shown on the mount.* (Heb. viii. 5.) *Christ suffered for us leaving us an example, that we should walk in his footsteps,* (1 Peter ii. 21.); it is by this alone that we shall be entitled to a full participation of the blessings of heaven. Be attentive, whilst I enlarge on this important subject.

1. *Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him,* (Rom. vi. 9.) because his resurrection includes a full and entire renovation: because he brings nothing earthly with him from the grave: and because *death is swallowed up in victory.* 1 Cor. xv. 54. This, my beloved, is the pattern, this is the example after which we must model our resurrection, and secure our perseverance. In order, therefore, to avoid a relapse, we must leave behind us in the grave all the appurtenances

of our former vices ; *we must be reformed in the newness of our minds*, (Rom. xii. 2.) and become pure, and holy, and spiritual. One passion neglected preserves all the rest: one wound treated with undue lenity draws to it the humours of the whole body. Our attention, therefore, must be redoubled ; our vigilance must increase : and as our blessed Lord did not reckon that his labours were concluded, or his victory complete, until death was entirely swallowed up in him ; so we, my brethren, who are his followers, as long as we have any passions to combat, any desires to repress, any virtues to perfectionate, we, I say, must not consider our resurrection as complete, and must not relax in our exertions until the new man be formed in our souls.

Nevertheless, the greater number of Christians consider the time of Easter as a time of relaxation, of repose, of liberty, and of pleasure. But I again

repeat, that in order to preserve the grace of your resurrection, it must be to you a time of renovation and fervour : the following are my reasons, and they are deserving of your attention.

In the first place, the generality of Christians suppose, that they are now at liberty to devote more time to dissipation, and less to the care of their souls, because the time of public penance is concluded ; they imagine that the peculiar advantage of Easter consists in the removal of all those restraints which they had impatiently endured ; and that they are to rejoice and be glad on that account. To convince you of the fallacy of an opinion so popular, and so injurious to the sanctity of this time, it will be only necessary to state, that the festive gladness of the Church is occasioned by the victory which Jesus, and with him all the faithful, have gained over the powers of hell ; that your return to

grace is the only subject of her canticles of joy ; and that, if you continue in the ways of iniquity, she still weeps, and mourns in secret over you, she is still clothed in sackcloth and ashes, and prostrate between the porch and the altar, she still continues to offer up her penitential tears to heaven in your behalf. She appears, therefore, triumphant, and surrounded with glory at this time, for no other purpose than to celebrate the triumph of grace in your hearts: she considers you as captives delivered by her means from the empire of death, and from the powers of darkness. In other respects, the time of her sojourning on earth is not the time of her rejoicing : at a distance from her heavenly Spouse, rent by schisms, dishonoured by scandals, afflicted by the falls of her children, she sighs incessantly after her deliverance, and even at the time that she is chanting her melodious canticles of joy, she

mournfully casts her eyes towards the abodes of Sion, and expresses aloud her ardent longings for the arrival of that happy moment, when she shall be for ever united with the Church in heaven, of which her Spouse is the visible Pontiff. We will, however, pass over these reasons, which apply to the Church alone, and insist principally on those which arise from the nature of your own dispositions at this time.

In the second place, therefore, if, after a life of dissipation and sin, you have been so happy at this time as to recover your innocence, and to effect a reconciliation with your injured God, by the virtue of the sacraments, you must consider that you are as yet only infants of grace, newly born to a life of justice and sanctity. In this state of infancy and weakness, you are more exposed to the attacks of the devil and the world, and less able to withstand them than at any other period : it is,

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consequently, necessary that you take greater precautions, and be more ardent in your petitions for assistance, in order to be enabled to sustain the conflict.—Moreover, the whole of your labours has hitherto been applied only to the eradication of your vicious habits : an important part still remains to be performed, namely, the great work of atonement for the past. You have, it is true, bewailed your sins at the tribunal of penance ; you prostrated yourselves before the minister of reconciliation with the most lively sentiments of compunction and sorrow : we wiped away your tears, repressed your sighs, and consoled your grief. But this is not sufficient. These are not the only fruits of repentance. The guilt of a whole life of dissipation and remissness is not entirely effaced by a few momentary tears. Sins are not expiated as soon as they are forgiven. If you are penitents indeed, where are

those transports of zeal, that indignation against yourselves, that eagerness of sufferings, which are always the first fruits of the Holy Spirit in the soul? You are only at the beginning, and you look for gratifications, which the greatest saints never durst think of indulging even after they had devoted whole years to the exercises of the severest mortification. Is it time to rest, and to amuse yourselves at the very commencement of your journey? That you should repose a little towards the end of your course, that you should allow of some relaxation after many years of austerity, would not be surprising; but the commencements at least of true repentance are always animated and fervent. The king of Ninive on his conversion covered his head with ashes, rent his garments, and chastised his body by sackcloth and fasting. These are always the first effects of grace; the efforts which it

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inspires are truly heroic : then it is that the good offices of a moderator are required : then it is that the prudence of an enlightened director is necessary, in order to repress the impetuosity of zeal which animates the soul.

But you, my beloved friends, if you begin by the flesh, can you expect to end by the spirit? If, at your first outset, you are seized with faintness and languor, how will you be able to support the conflicts, the irksomeness, the fatigues which you will have to encounter during the course of your long journey?

Besides, experience will teach you, that temptations are never more violent than at this time. Now it is that the devil is enraged at losing his prey. Now it is that he exerts his utmost endeavours, in hopes of reducing you again under his dominion : he now redoubles his attacks ; he rekindles your

half-extinguished passions ; he strews the path with thorns and briars ; he throws every obstacle in your way ; he magnifies in your eyes every difficulty : in a word, he exhausts every artifice, in order to re-enter the house of your soul with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Temptations, likewise, are not only more violent at this time, but your powers of resistance are weaker in proportion. Your piety is like a fresh enkindled spark, and it must be nourished with great care and attention : it is like a young plant, which is in danger of being destroyed by the first noxious blast, of being dried up by the least *heat of temptation*. At what time, therefore, can fidelity and watchfulness be more necessary, more indispensable ? Would it be prudent to repose, and be off your guard, at the moment when all your enemies are prepared for the attack ? Is it not now that retirement, prayer, renuncia-

tion of the world and its pleasures, the performance of works of mercy, and reading good books, are the most seasonable? and if you expose the treasure, which you carry in a heart so little instructed in the means of defence, is it not a manifest proof that you are not unwilling to lose it?

I might, likewise, urge that, on account of the fewer exterior aids to piety which are held out by the Church at this time, it is your duty to supply the deficiency by a renewed zeal and attention: for weak as you are as yet in virtue, this privation is attended with danger. You have reason to fear that, since her exhortations to penance are intermitted, her public fast terminated, and all is joy and gladness around you, you will not be able to stand alone in penitential attire, and resist the temptations to sensual enjoyments which will arise from the liberty of this holy time. The Church supposes that

you are now risen to a new life, and that you no longer require the fostering care of a parent. She has sheltered you hitherto, as it were under her wings, as though you had been recently brought into life, and nurtured you with the blood of Jesus. She now retires within the veil of the sanctuary, and proposes for the subject of your meditations the ineffable mystery of the Unity of God, and of the Trinity of Persons, because she concludes that your lives will henceforward be heavenly, and that the only subject fit for the employment of your pious thoughts, is that which is proposed by the Church in heaven to the contemplation of the elect before the throne of God. Judge, therefore, whether it be proper to indulge in the pleasures of the world at a time when your lives are supposed to be hidden with Christ in God.

Allowing, however, that there would be neither impropriety nor danger in

devoting this time to worldly enjoyment, and in intermitting your meditations and self-denials, it would be unjustifiable, I fear, in the greatest part of my present hearers on another account. A relaxation in the austerity of your lives, if it is at all warrantable in a christian point of view, can only be so in proportion to the severity of our former penance. Now, my beloved friends, in what manner have you passed the Lent? What have you suffered during a time which the Church has consecrated to the commemoration of the sufferings and death of your Redeemer? In what respect have you distinguished this time from the other seasons of the year? Have you cloathed yourselves in sackcloth and ashes? Have you mingled the tears of repentance with your daily bread? Have you devoted more time to prayer, to retirement, and to works of charity? Have you been more regular in your

conduct ? Have you fulfilled the laws of the Church in their just rigour, and by the severity of fasting chastised a body, which, you well know, you cannot chastise too much ? Ah ! the just man may, with propriety, wipe away his tears, put on the robes of joy and gladness, partake in the public triumphs of the Church, and taste with her the consolations of this holy season ; because, so far from mitigating the rigour of the laws of fasting, he has even added to its severity. But you, who could not, or rather, would not comply even with the letter of the law ;—you, who celebrate the festival of the resurrection with hearts as rebellious, and with passions as headstrong and turbulent as they were before the commencement of the fast ;—you, I say, so far from being authorized to indulge in relaxations which you have not merited, are bound at this time to make reparation for your former neg-

lect, to supply the deficiencies which have been suffered to exist, and to change this time of joy into a time of sorrow and humiliation.

These, my beloved brethren, are your duties; this is the rule of conduct which alone will ensure your perseverance. In corroboration of the truth of this statement, I might add, that the preservation of grace depends on the same means as the acquisition. This is a general and indubitable maxim. If, therefore, you have been truly re-instated in the friendship of God at this holy time, what measures did you adopt in order to effect this happy reconciliation? You had recourse to the tears of compunction; you excited in your souls the most lively sentiments of sorrow; you sedulously avoided the occasions of your former sins; you were sincerely convinced of your weakness, and of the necessity of prayer and circumspection; you entertained a

disgust for the world and its pleasures; you imbibed a relish for the service of God and the duties of piety; you felt a secret horror running through your veins when you reflected on the danger of being surprised in the midst of your sins.—These were the means by which you acquired the grace of God; and these are the means by which you must preserve it. Follow, therefore, the happy path which led to your deliverance, and it will conduct you to the end you wish for, if, indeed, you wish to persevere. Reflect that, as your corruption is unceasingly endeavouring to frustrate the effects of grace, you must not relax in any of your exertions to counteract the efforts of your corruption: if you do, you give up the cause at once, and sacrifice the fruits of all your past labours.

Before I conclude, I will address to you the words, which the apostle addressed to the newly converted Gala-

tians : *My brethren, stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage*, (Gal. v. 1.) from which you have been delivered by the grace of Jesus Christ. You have sedulously and piously endeavoured to purify your consciences ; you have unfolded the guilt which oppressed them at the sacred tribunal ; and will you consent that your tears, your confusion, your humiliation, your sorrow, should be of no avail ? Cast off for ever the chains which have so long held you in captivity ; suffer not the devouring worm to be regenerated in your souls : enter no more the paths of iniquity, the ruggedness and the thorns of which you have so long experienced : *be not held again under the yoke of bondage*, from which you have been delivered by the grace of Jesus Christ.—Compare the happiness which you enjoy in the state of innocence and grace, with the disquietude which you endured in the

state of tepidity and sin. Are not your souls enlivened by the presence of the Holy Ghost? Do you not enjoy a tranquillity and peace, which the world and its vanities could never impart? Are not your fears allayed, and your anxieties removed? Does not the word of God communicate the most soothing consolation to your minds, instead of the terror and affright which it formerly occasioned? Recall to mind the days of your licentiousness and sloth: could the pleasures which you then experienced be compared with the happiness which you now enjoy? Is not this truly the day,—the great day which the Lord hath made? Did you ever witness in the regions of death a day so calm,—so delightful,—so enchanting? —Be steadfast, therefore, and walk on with resolution in the ways of the Lord, which you have so courageously entered: be not weary of a yoke, which imparts the purest happiness and

delight to those who carry it: *Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage.*

You are now the children of light : pride yourselves on this glorious title : despise with a holy contempt every object which is inferior to your splendid hopes. You are the captives of Jesus Christ,—the fruits of his death,—the trophies of his resurrection ; do not diminish the glory of his triumph, by returning to the hard and ignominious servitude of his enemy.—What more shall I say ? The angels, who surround the throne of the Lamb,—your brethren, who are gone before you with the sign of faith, — the saints who adorned our once holy island, all look down upon you from their celestial abodes with delight ; they all celebrate in their immortal choirs your happy conversion, — your deliverance, — and your reunion with them, and with the Church in Heaven : they all sing at

the foot of the throne canticles of thanksgiving and praise. And will you, my dear brethren, turn away from their harmonious concerts of jubilation, and shut the gates of Sion against yourselves by an unworthy relapse? Will you renounce the love of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and break asunder the bands of union which have been so happily cemented? *Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage*: exchange not the holy liberty of the children of God for the opprobrious slavery of sin and Satan.—You have rejoiced, likewise, the ministers of the Church on earth. They have been the joyful witnesses of your tears and compunction: they have testified the sincerity of your repentance: they have applied to your souls the blood of the Lamb: they have reconciled you with the altar, and with God, whom you there worship: they have given you the kiss of peace: they consider you

as children of faith, whom they have brought forth to Jesus Christ, and formed for heaven by their prayers, their tears, and the tender solitudes of their pastoral zeal. Will you again fill their hearts with bitterness? will you force them to weep between the porch and the altar, and denounce against you the judgments which are incurred by those who trample upon the blood of the sanctuary? will you, instead of being their joy, their crown, their consolation, inflict the deepest wounds in their souls? Ah! beloved Christians, do not you overturn what with so many anxious pains, so much tender solicitude for your immortal welfare, their piety and zeal have enabled them to set up: do not sacrifice the labours of your own repentance. *Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage:* return no more to the slavery from which you have been delivered, but preserve the treasure of

grace, which you have received, until the great day of the Lord, when you will be entitled to present it to Him, as the pledge and price of a happy immortality.

LOW-SUNDAY.

ON SENSUAL ENJOYMENTS.

*There was a certain rich man, who was
cloathed in purple and fine linen;
and feasted sumptuously every day.*

Luke xvi. 19.

AT the time, my beloved brethren, when the restraints of public penance are suspended, and example and inclination invite you to pleasure and enjoyment;—at the time, when the canticles of spiritual gladness and festivity, with which the Church celebrates the mystery of the resurrection, are too often interrupted by the songs

of dissipation and worldly joy ;—at the time, when the greater number of the faithful throw off the yoke of mortification, and return with increased relish to the world, from which they had been unwillingly separated during the fast of Lent ; it will not be unreasonable to call your attention to the history of a man whose manners and dispositions were not dissimilar from yours, and from whose condemnation you may collect the most undeniable evidence that a life of sensuality and worldly pleasures is a life of sin, and will be succeeded hereafter by torments that will never end.—In vain will you attempt to justify this love of pleasure, by alledging your strict attention to the duties of morality and religion : the rich man was probably the same ; he was neither a murderer, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, nor an oppressor of the widow or the orphan ; and yet he was condemned. Harken

to the parable: *There was a certain rich man, says our Lord, who was cloathed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores: desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; and no one did give him: moreover, the dogs came, and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died; and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: and he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in these flames. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things:*

but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. This, my beloved, is a parable delivered by Truth itself : and the whole purport of it is intended, as I will demonstrate by a few instructive reflections, to prove one of the most important points that can be discussed in the system of christian morality, namely, that a worldly life alone is a life of sin, and worthy the severe effects of God's eternal justice.

1. In the first place, the parable remarks that he was rich : *there was a certain rich man.* Nothing odious, however, is added to this circumstance. He is not accused of acquiring his wealth by unjust means, nor of behaving with haughtiness or arrogance in his exalted rank. It is merely stated that he was rich : and it may be presumed that he peaceably enjoyed the patrimony of his ancestors, void of ambition, free from cares, surrounded by tranquil and domestic pleasures,

and enjoying the sweets of a property which was his own by right. Could the possession of wealth be more innocently acquired? And yet, this was the first step that led to his condemnation.

In the second place, *he was cloathed in purple and fine linen.* This, undoubtedly, was a costly dress in those times. But it is not said that he surpassed the bounds which custom prescribed to people of his rank and station. It is not said that his means were unequal to his expenditure, nor that the labourer, the tradesman, and others who were about him, were sufferers on account of his splendid magnificence. Nothing at all of this is so much as hinted at. Neither is it said that he endeavoured to ensnare the innocent by the improper adjustment of his dress, and that he justified himself by the plea, *that he meant no harm*—a plea, by which too many of the fair sex, now-a-days, endeavour to justify

the indecent and artificial display of their personal charms. Nothing of the kind is laid to his charge. It is said that he was rich, that he was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and that he was fond of pomp and splendor; and these things were certainly more excusable under the old, than under the new law; for Jesus, poor and debased, had not then given the example, nor displayed in his own person the model of modesty and simplicity.

In the third place, *he feasted sumptuously every day.* Here again we must consider that the law of Moses forbade only excess: that strict watch over the sensual appetite, which has been since prescribed by the gospel, was not then enjoined. Milk and honey were a part of the promises made to the sons of Abraham: and it was rational to conclude that the sweets of plenty, which were held out as the recompense of fidelity, might be enjoyed without

crime. It is said, indeed, that he feasted *sumptuously* : but it is not said that he eat forbidden meats, or that he violated the fasts and abstinences enjoined by the law. It is not said that he was guilty of debauchery or excess ; that the infidel and libertine were his guests ; that improper conversation formed any part of his entertainment ; or that there was any thing in his conduct which marked him out to his associates and others as a loose and dissipated character.—No neglect of his religious duties is imputed to him : nor is there any thing said, from which we might infer that he was either a hard master, an irreconcilable enemy, a perfidious friend, or an unfaithful husband. He is not accused of envying the prosperity of others, nor of defiling his tongue with calumny and detraction.—In a word, according to the description given in the gospel, he was fond of the table, and spent his days

in Jerusalem in a gay, splendid, and agreeable manner. In other respects, he seems to have been a man of probity, of inoffensive morals, and living in the world as the world expects that men of property should live. It may, moreover, be said, that he seems to have been one of those men whom the public voice extols, who is proposed as a model of rational life, and whom piety itself would hardly venture to condemn.

Now, my brethren, according to the description I have given, (and I leave it to any of you to say whether the description is not a just one) does he appear very culpable? Were any man, except our Saviour, to declare that such a life led to perdition, and that such a man was deserving of eternal torments, would you not exclaim against his intemperate zeal? would you not cry out, in the words of the army of Israel, when Jonathan was

condemned by his father Saul, *What has he done? Is he to die because he has tasted a little honey?*—Early impressions, I acknowledge, have induced us to form no very favourable opinion of the rich man: but what is his crime? The scripture says that he was rich, that he was superbly cloathed, and that he feasted sumptuously every day. Do you discover any thing very enormous or criminal in all this? The man who, in these times, is guilty of no other crime, is applauded as a man of virtue—as a model worthy of the imitation of others. “Such a one,” they say, “lives up to his rank, does honour to his fortune, and by his morality and probity gives respectability to religion and virtue.” Praises are not sufficient: comparisons injurious to the piety of the true servants of Jesus are introduced: “it is thus,” they say, “that a Christian ought to live in the world, and to avoid the enthusias-

tic folly of those men, who disgrace piety by their austere deportment and indiscreet singularities." This is the language of worldlings: and I tremble, when I reflect that the only victim of the eternal justice of God, designated by our Lord, is a character which would be held up as a model of virtue in the present age.

Perhaps you may say that the rich man was devoid of charity, and that his treatment of Lazarus was cruel and criminal in the highest degree. It is not for the minister of the gospel to gloss over any transgressions of the law of charity: and therefore I will not pretend to be his advocate, and excuse his guilt. But let us attend to the parable, - and perhaps it will appear that the guilt which you, or at least the greater number of Christians, contract, by the violation of the law of charity, is greater than that which is attributed to the rich man. *And there was a*

certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table ; and no one did give him. There is certainly something shocking to the feelings of humanity in this account. But let us examine into the chief design of the parable, and we shall be convinced that our Lord intended to describe the character, not of an uncharitable and cruel man, but of a man who lived in indolence, and who was too earnestly engaged in pleasure to attend to the wants of the poor: we shall be convinced, that the history of Lazarus is only an incident in the parable, and that its main object is to expose the danger of riches and sensual enjoyments.

In the first place, Lazarus was a common beggar, — a beggar, who looked for subsistence, not to one individual only, but to the public at large : — a beggar, who might have been treat-

ed as an impostor, or as an indolent vagrant; and who might have been passed by unnoticed, as an object who had no just claims on his charity, with as much reason as common vagrants of this description are neglected by you on many occasions.

Secondly, I acknowledge that Lazarus *lay at his gate full of sores*. Such an object of distress ought undoubtedly to have excited his compassion: but there was some merit in suffering such a disgusting spectacle, as Lazarus was, to remain unmolested at his gate, to make it his usual place of resort, and to exhibit constantly before his eyes the display of his multiplied sores, without so much as rebuking him for his intrusion. You, perhaps, on similar occasions, hasten to bestow your charity. But what are your motives? To succour a fellow-creature in distress? To relieve the wants of a member of the same body? To show forth

your love for Jesus,—the Father of the poor? Or rather, are you not induced by the desires of removing, as quickly as possible, such a disgusting object from your sight? And does it not frequently happen that, instead of fixing your eyes on the nauseous spectacle, and endeavouring to form an idea of the ulcerated wounds of your own souls in the sight of God, you distribute your charity by the hands of a servant, in order that your delicate feelings might not be injured? If this be the truth, your delicacy, perhaps, is as offensive to the Almighty, as the indifference and neglect of the rich man.

Lastly: it is said that *Lazarus desired the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and that no one did give him*. It is not, however, said, that Lazarus asked for them, or that the rich man refused to give them: he *desired*, says the parable, and *no one* did give him. The inattention was undoubtedly cri-

minal. But was it to be expected that a man of his rank and condition should send relief from his own table? would it not have sufficed if he had given general orders to his domestics to administer to him? This is what is usually done by the great: (and this might have been done by the rich man) and yet they do not consider themselves responsible, if their orders are neglected. In a word, the rich man is censured, not on account of any thing hard-hearted or unfeeling in his character, but on account of the indolence of his disposition, and his want of attention to the distresses of Lazarus.

Thus, when Abraham declares to him the cause of his condemnation, he does not say, in the words which will be pronounced by the great Judge at the day of judgment: "Lazarus was naked, and thou didst not clothe him; he was hungry, and thou didst not give him to eat; he was sick, and

number of his elect. Now, is nothing more necessary, in order to shew forth in our bodies the image of Christ crucified, than to abstain from adultery, from theft, from intemperance, and from the other grosser crimes? Our divine Model, it is true, was free from all these vices: but was this the whole of his virtue? Far from it: in addition to this, He was meek and humble of heart: He forgave and prayed for his greatest enemies: He was not conformed to this world: his life was in direct opposition to its maxims: He neither courted or enjoyed its pleasures or its vanities: He was a stranger to ease: He had not a place whereon to lay his head: He carried his cross from his birth, and He finished his course in the midst of the severest torments: the grand principle, which He came to establish among men, was the principle of self-abasement and self-denial, and his whole life was con-

formable to it.—In this, therefore, He is your model. Whether you are rich or poor, living in the world, or retired from it, married or single, old or young, if you do not bear the image of Christ crucified, you are lost for ever.

Nevertheless, provided you live in a regular way, and are guilty of no gross or enormous crime, you are not apprehensive about your eternal lot; and indeed, so far are you from being alarmed on that head, that when we urge you to devote the remainder of your days to prayer, retirement, mortification, and the practice of virtue, you coolly reply, that it is dangerous to attempt too much, that it is prudent to avoid the excesses into which others have been hurried by indiscretion, and that you see nothing in your conduct that requires to be corrected. St. Augustin lamented that certain Pagans in his time refused to be converted to the faith, on the supposition that nothing

more was required of man than to refrain from excess, to lead a regular life, and to abstain from injuring his neighbour. "My conduct," they said, "is blameless; why, then, should I embrace a new religion? If my life were disorderly, you would do well to hold out to me a law, which would place a restraint on my conduct, and prevent me from committing any excess. But if I avoid such things without the help of the law of Jesus, why should I subject myself to it?"

In the same manner, when we exhort these regular people to embrace a more christian life,—a life more conformed to the maxims of Christ and his saints; when we remind them of the solemn promise, of renouncing the world and its pleasures, which they made in baptism, and which they ratify by the public profession of Christianity, they reply, that religion does not descend to trifles; that christian morality and

piety consist in leading a regular life ; in being a good subject ; a faithful spouse ; a generous, disinterested, just, sincere master ; an upright, honest, steady servant ; and a friend to all mankind. "These, they say, are the essentials ; with these virtues a person may be saved in any state : the addition of any thing else is totally unnecessary ; it is all a matter of discretion."

But attend to the sentiments of the same father in another part of his writings. Their conduct, he says, is irreproachable according to the world : they are men of probity : women of regular conduct : they honour their parents : they do not over-reach their brethren : they are faithful to their promises ; they commit no injustice ;—but yet, with all these virtues, they are not good Christians. And the reason is, because *Christians* crucify their flesh, with its vices and concu-

piscences ; whereas *they* cherish and flatter this domestic enemy :—*Christians* are not men of this world ; whereas *they* are its admirers,—its partisans,—its slaves :—*Christians* offer violence to their own will on every occasion ; whereas *they* have no other rule of conduct than their own will :—*Christians* are like pilgrims on earth, sighing incessantly after their true country ; whereas *they* would willingly fix their abode on earth, and consent to live for ever in this vale of tears :—*Christians* consider riches as obstacles to salvation ; injuries, contumelies, and affronts, as blessings ;—afflictions and pains, as favours from heaven ; the figure of this world, as a dream ; whereas *they* view all these things in the opposite light :—*Christians* are spiritual ; whereas *they* are worldly, and carnal-minded.

Ah ! my beloved, if nothing more were required to form a good Christian, than to abstain from excess, exam-

ples of moderation in this kind were not wanting among the Pagans ; and such examples, let me assure you, as are seldom equalled even among the disciples of Jesus. The excellence of a Christian does not consist wholly in avoiding excess, but more particularly in the practice of the gospel virtues ; it does not consist wholly in the possession of the qualities which are admired by the world, such as honour, probity, generosity, uprightness, moderation, humanity, and such other social virtues ; but it more particularly consists in being animated with the spirit of Christ crucified, and in possessing a lively faith, a pure conscience, and an unfeigned charity : the Christian must acquire merit in the sight of God by his actions, otherwise he will not be entitled to an eternal reward : his life must be worthy of a saint, otherwise it will be unworthy of a Christian : the tree that bears leaves without bearing

fruit, is accursed, as well as the tree that is completely withered : the gospel condemns to the same eternal torments the *unprofitable* as well as the *unfaithful* servant.

Suffer not yourselves, my brethren, to be lulled into a false security. During the whole of your lives, you are required to bear in your bodies the image of your crucified Jesus. The obligation of denying yourselves, of chastising your flesh, and of reducing it into subjection, will never cease. Particular times, it is true, are set apart for a more severe course of penance : but, when those times are elapsed, sensuality is not to be indulged without restraint. *He that is born of God*, (1 John v.) saith St. John in the epistle of this Sunday, *overcometh the world*; *overcometh its vices and concupiscences*; *overcometh its vanities and follies*; *overcometh its pleasures and allurements*. Stand on your guard,

therefore, my dearly beloved, and be resolute. Run the course that is set before you. Fight the good fight, and never forget that it is the battle of the Lord. Take to yourselves the armour of God: assume the lofty spirit of conquerors, and keep in subjection your vanquished enemies,—the world,—the devil,—and the flesh. Bear in mind what it is that you are contending for. Fix your affections on heaven. By these means will you ensure to yourselves the possession of it hereafter.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE PUNISHMENTS WHICH
AWAIT A LIFE OF SENSUALITY
HEREAFTER : EXEMPLIFIED IN
THE CONDEMNATION OF THE
RICH MAN. . . . Luke xvi.

*Christ suffered for us, leaving you an
example that you should follow his
steps. . . . 1 Peter ii. 21.*

VAIN is it, my beloved friends, to suppose that the sufferings of Christ have exempted his disciples from the obligation of self-denial and penance: vain is it to suppose that the Christian may have his consolation here, and attain to eternal

happiness hereafter *Christ suffered for us*, says St. Peter, not to exempt us from suffering, but *he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps*. Convinced of the reality of this obligation, the saints entered the thorny paths with eagerness: when joy was set before them they embraced the cross; knowing that through many tribulations they must enter the kingdom of heaven. The patient, the afflicted Lazarus, was received into the bosom of Abraham on account of his sufferings, but the rich man, who received good things in this life, and enjoyed his consolation during the days of his mortality, was on that account cast into outer darkness.

With this precept, with this model, and with these examples before our eyes, can we flatter ourselves into a belief that it is not criminal to spend the greater part of life in studying our

ease and comfort? Can we dare to hope that, after having fixed our affections on the happiness of this world, we shall be entitled to the happiness of the next? No: christian brethren, the state of things after death will be totally reversed. They, who mourn here, will rejoice hereafter: they, who rejoice, will mourn: sufferings will be succeeded by happiness; and pleasures will be succeeded by sufferings. What a consolation is this to the poor, the persecuted, the afflicted members of Christ! And what an incitement to the wealthy and unoppressed, to forsake the paths of pleasure, and embrace the self-denials of the cross.

In order to elucidate this point more fully, I will deduce my arguments from the same energetic parable which formed the subject of my last discourse. From the terrible description, there given of the reverse which takes place in the next world, I will prove to

you the necessity of walking in the footsteps of your suffering Jesus, and by displaying before your eyes the rewards conferred on patient suffering, and the punishments received for a life of sensuality and ease, I will encourage you to embrace the only means of ensuring your salvation.

And it came to pass, says our Saviour, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell! Luke xvi. 22. This, beloved Christians, is the new order of things which the justice of God will establish in the world to come.—Lazarus died first; for the Lord hastens to visit his elect, and abridges the days of their sufferings. The rich man survived him; for the Lord opens slowly to sinners the gate of death, in order that they may have time and opportunity for repentance. The rich man, however, dies at last; for worldly

wealth, although it cements the closest union between the possessor and the world, cannot avert the stroke of death. He is buried. This circumstance is not remarked at the death of **Lazarus**. Funeral honours are undoubtedly paid to the memory of the rich man ; pomp and splendor accompany him even to the grave ; and probably a superb monument is erected over the remains of his mortality. But his soul, oppressed under the weight of her iniquities, is ingulfed deep in the abyss of perdition ; *he is buried in hell !* The abandoned corps of Lazarus, on the contrary, with difficulty meets with a friendly hand to convey it to the grave : his end is without honour in the eyes of men ; but his soul is led in triumph by the spirits of God to the bosom of Abraham. The one is buried in hell, the other enters the gates of paradise. The condition of both is now unalterable.—Senseless as we are !

of what consequence is it whether the state in which God has placed us during the short moment that we appear on earth, be poverty or wealth, pain or ease? Why are we not solicitous for our future state alone; a state which will be unchangeable and eternal!

Let us, however, continue the history of the parable, and examine all the particulars relating to the punishment which the rich man endures in the place of torments.

No sooner was he ingulfed in the deep abyss, says our Saviour, than he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham with Lazarus in his bosom. During the time of his mortal life, he never lifted up his eyes to examine into the true state of his interior; he had not a suspicion that the path he was then walking in,—a path so secure in appearance, and so much recommended by the world, was the path that would lead him to perdition. It is not so

with abandoned sinners: they are generally sensible of their perilous situation; they know that they are walking in the broad road to hell, and their remorse of conscience is assuaged only by the project of a future conversion. But the tepid—the slothful Christians, of whom I am speaking, whose affections are divided between God and the world, and whose piety is little more than the detestation of intemperance and excess, these, I say, generally die before they have discovered the criminality of their way of life. The rich man, therefore, when it is too late, lifts up his eyes, and beholds Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham clothed in the robes of glory and immortality. This is the first ingredient of his bitter chalice. A beggar covered with sores is in the palace of comfort and happiness; and he, the possessor of unbounded wealth, is consigned to everlasting flames. What a

reverse, my dear friends ! With what envy does he recall to mind the former distressed state of Lazarus ; and with what anguish and rage does he behold his own unhappy lot. In a moment a distinct idea is formed in his mind of the immense happiness which he has lost, and of the irreparable evils which he has incurred. He comprehends the whole extent of the unchangeable delights of Lazarus, and at one view he beholds the dreadful complication of torments which await him for eternity. Painful, my beloved friends, is the representation of lost happiness ; more painful, if possible, than the sense of present sufferings. Yes ; heaven, says a holy father, will torment the sinner more intolerably than the flames of hell.

In this manner will God display the splendors of his glory, and unfold the heavens before those millions of souls who are the victims of his eternal jus-

tice. In this manner will he expose to the view of every individual of the damned the object the most calculated to excite his rage and increase his torments. From the midst of the flames will these children of wrath behold through all eternity their brethren, their friends, and relatives, enthroned in their seats of immortal bliss, united for ever with the God whom they served. This sight alone will constitute their greatest torment. They will reflect that they were created for the same happiness, and that their hearts were formed for the enjoyment of the same God.—In general the sight of an object to which we have no right, or for which we have no affection, excites no regret for its loss. But here an irresistible impulse, with a velocity far outstripping the flight of the swiftest arrow, will carry the heart towards the bosom of its great Creator, when an invisible hand will suddenly interpose,

and, arresting it in the height of its progress, will hurl it impetuously back again at an immeasurable distance, far from the object of its fondest wishes: it will endure eternally the cruel pangs occasioned by its violent efforts to unite itself with its Creator, its end, the center of all its desires, and it will be restrained by the dreadful chains of divine vengeance, and fixed for ever to its place of torments.

The Lord of Glory himself, in order to increase their despair, will appear to them in greater splendor and magnificence, if possible, than to his elect. He will exhibit before their eyes his whole majesty. He will excite in their souls the most lively sentiments of a loss of which their nature cannot be divested: and by the display of his clemency, goodness, and munificence, he will inflict a more bitter wound in their soul than by the terror of his justice and wrath. On earth, my be-

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loved friends, we are not susceptible of that ardent love, which the soul is capacitated to feel for her God : because the false pleasures which surround us, and which we take for real blessings, either divide or totally absorb our affections. But when the soul is separated from the body, all these phantoms which deceived her, will vanish, all these attachments will cease. She will be unable to love any thing except her God, because she will be convinced that God alone is worthy of her love. All her affections, her desires, her whole being will be centered in Him. Every thing will seem to draw her into his embraces, and the weight of her iniquity will fasten her immovably to the place of torments. 'Thus being incessantly forced to attempt her flight towards heaven, and incessantly thrust back into the abyss, she will be more cruelly tormented by her inability to cease from loving, than by the ter-



rible effects of the justice and wrath of him whom she loves.

The rich man suffers, in the second place, from the recollection of the good things which he enjoyed during life. *Son*, says Abraham, *remember thou didst receive good things in thy life*. What a crowd of tormenting thoughts must at that moment have rushed into his mind! What are now the pretended pleasures which he enjoyed during the dream of life? What satisfaction can they impart to him in the midst of his flames? Oh! he is sensible that these words are addressed to him, not in order to administer consolation to his soul, but to reproach him for his folly and madness.—The same sentence will resound in the ears of every condemned sinner for all eternity: *Son, remember thou didst receive good things in thy life*. Remember the days which thou didst spend in luxury and ease. How averse wert thou to momentary

sufferings, and how eager in the pursuit of transient delights ! Console thyself with the thought of what thou hast enjoyed. Thou didst prefer the pleasures of a moment to the pleasures of eternity ; be patient, therefore, and submit to the evils which thou hast deliberately chosen.

Again, he will be reminded of the gifts of grace which he has abused, not indeed in the tone of irony, but of open reproach : *Son, remember thou didst receive good things.* Thou wast a member of the true Church, a child of the saints ; thou didst receive the benefit of a christian education ; I endowed thy heart with good dispositions ; I displayed before thy eyes models of every virtue ; I provided thee with books both of instruction and example ; I exhorted thee to embrace a life of piety by the mouth of my ministers ; I incessantly spoke to thy soul by secret inspirations, and urged thee

to provide for thy salvation by the sudden and unprovided death of numbers of thy acquaintance; I impeded the ways of vice by every obstacle, and smoothed with the greatest care the paths of virtue; in a word, I did so much for thee, that thou mightest have saved thy soul with less difficulty and labour, than what it has cost thee to lose it. Remember, then, ungrateful soul, the graces which thou hast abused, and behold how easy it would have been to avoid that terrible abyss into which thou hast fallen.

These sufferings again are increased by the external tortures which he endures: *he is tormented in flames, he is enveloped with fire and brimstone, so intensely burning that he is fain to petition for one drop of water only to comfort him: "Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in these flames:"*—and even this consolation is denied him.

Instead of purple and fine linen, he is now cloathed with a garment of fire, and in proportion to the delicacies which he had enjoyed, so much torment and sorrow is given to him, (*Rev. xviii. 7.*)

We know not, indeed, the whole extent of his sufferings, and therefore I will not pretend to disclose them, lest I should throw a shade over the dreadful picture. This is all that we know: that for nearly two thousand years he has incessantly cried out in the midst of his tortures, *I am tormented in this flame.*

We know that he suffers more than eye has seen, ear heard, or the heart of man can conceive. We know that eternal flames, enkindled by the wrath of an angry God, envelope his soul. We know, that in this dungeon of horror and despair the victim is salted with eternal fire, (*Mark ix. 48.*) We know that a secret and devouring worm, fixed by God in the midst of his heart, will prey for ever on his vi-

tals, and that his tears will never extinguish the flames which encompass him. We know that, wearied with blaspheming the Author of his existence, he will weep and gnash his teeth in the most dreadful agonies of despair. We know that, in the excess of pain, he will for ever curse the day on which he was born, and the womb that bore him ; that he will call on death, and death will not come to his relief. This we know, for these are expressions taken from holy writ : but they do not convey an adequate idea of his sufferings.

Infinite as these evils may appear, they are again aggravated by the reflection that they will last for ever. *Besides, said Abraham, between us and you there is a great chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither.*

Sufferings which will end, are always attended with some consolation : hope

is a soothing occupation to the mind. But to the condemned sinner, futurity is the most dreadful reflection. The farther he extends his views into that immense space, the more distant do the boundaries appear: eternity alone is the measure of his torments. Willingly would he banish eternity from his thoughts; but the justice of God places it incessantly before his eyes, forces him to behold it, and to make it the constant subject of his contemplation. Ah! dear Christians, these are sufferings indeed: what a complication of evils await the unhappy soul who refuses to walk in the footsteps of his suffering Jesus during the days of his mortal pilgrimage.—I pass rapidly, however, over these great truths; for they are truths, of which the recital alone is sufficient. They contain plentiful sources of meditation; and I will leave it to my hearers to weigh them more attentively in private.

Lastly, the rich man suffers on account of his brethren who survived him, and to whom he had probably been an occasion of sin by his voluptuous mode of living. *Father Abraham*, says he, *at least send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment : for they will not believe unless a person arise from the dead.*

My beloved friends, many souls, perhaps, with whom you were connected during their abode on earth, are now buried in hell, and receive an increase of torture from every fault which you commit, because they were in part the cause of your depravity. Perhaps a father, a mother, whose love for you was too great, or rather, whose love was misplaced ; who favoured you in your growing passions, who attentively provided you every advantage for the world, but who neglected, or paid

little attention to your spiritual welfare ; who perhaps instilled into your mind the moral virtues, but never inculcated the christian virtues of meekness, humility, and love ; who loved the world, and conformed to the world, and taught you to do the same ; ah ! perhaps their unhappy souls are crying out from the bottomless abyss, and entreating the Almighty to allow them to appear before you enveloped in flames, and to endeavour to reclaim you from the vicious habits you contracted through their neglect. Perhaps a brother, a sister, a friend, an acquaintance with whom you were too familiar, with whom you learned to offend God, whose example and allurements enticed you to sin, are now uttering unavailing lamentations, and soliciting in vain for permission to display before you the horrors of their state, and excite you to repent of faults, of which they were in part the cause. Perhaps

many souls, to whom you yourselves have been the occasion of sin, either by dress, example, or allurements, are now immured in the deepest abyss through your fault, and are earnestly entreating to be allowed to exhibit before you the dreadful effects of your irreligious deportment, in order either to move you to repentance, or at least deter you from precipitating others into that place of wo.

But what reply will be given to their entreaties? *They have Moses and the prophets*, will the Almighty say, and, in addition, the precepts of Jesus Christ. If the scriptures are insufficient to excite them to repentance, it would be to no purpose that a man appeared to them from the dead.— You fondly imagine that the sight of a miracle, of a man risen from the dead, of an angel speaking to you on the part of God, would induce you to reform your conduct, and renounce

the vanities of the world : but you are deceived, it would produce no such effect ; you would discover reasons to doubt the reality of the appearance ; your corrupted heart would still alledge pretexts to refuse its submission. 'The miracles of our Saviour removed neither the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, nor the incredulity of the Sadducees. The greatest miracle which you can witness is the sublimity of the christian doctrine, the purity of its moral precepts, the dignity and divine origin of its scriptures, and its wonderful propagation over the world. If these miracles do not move, enlighten, and reform you, in vain would Providence work in your favour any other prodigy. *They have Moses and the prophets. If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe if a man arose from the dead.*

Let me exhort you, therefore, my beloved friends, to peruse these sacred

books with leisure and attention : it is the advice which is given by our Saviour in the words quoted above : let a chapter both at morning and night be your regular lecture. Ah ! if you meditated attentively on these divine writings, it would not be necessary to adduce arguments to prove that a worldly life, a life of luxury and pleasure, although free from vice and excess, is a life of sin ; it would not be necessary to inform you that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, that the Christian must deny himself, and not seek his consolation in this world ; that he must use this world as if he used it not ; and that if he loves his soul in this life, he will lose it in the next : all this, I say, would be unnecessary, for these are the most simple, the most familiar truths of the gospel.

Besides, what is the duration of our pilgrimage on earth ? Is it of sufficient length to warrant our devoting the

greater part of it to pleasure, or is the happiness which awaits us hereafter so insignificant, so trifling, as to excuse our abhorrence of the painful duties which will insure to us the possession of it? Our life on earth is only a moment. In the twinkling of an eye the world vanishes again from our sight, and we are hurried into the abyss of eternity. If the only pleasure which you were to enjoy during a long life, was to be confined within the compass of a dream, and if the remainder of your days was to be devoted to unutterable torments for the pleasure which you indulged during that dream, would your lot appear enviable? And yet this, says St. Chrysostom, is the case of those who live in ease and comfort here, and neglect their eternal welfare. You resemble the man who dreams that he is happy, and who, when he has dreamt his dream, is awakened by the sound of a terrific voice, and, instead

of the phantom of felicity, which had beguiled his imagination, beholds with astonishment the smoke of eternal flames issuing from the bottomless pit, prepared to punish him for the transient pleasure which he had indulged.—
Meditate, my beloved brethren, on these sacred truths: let the hopes and the duties of your vocation be your only study and delight, and then you will make such use of the perishable things of this world, as not to lose those which are eternal.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF THE LAW
OF GOD.

*'What is this he saith? We know
not what he speaketh. . . John xvi. 18.*

HOW frequently, my beloved brethren, are these words of the disciples adopted by the imperfect followers of Jesus, when they are admonished that their tepid and immoral conduct is condemned both by the testimony of their own conscience, and by the gospel; and that they are walking in the broad road which leadeth to

perdition. "*What is this?* they say: *we know not what he speaketh.* Does he say that our conduct is condemned by the testimony of our conscience? How can this be reconciled with the peace of mind which we enjoy? Is not this tranquillity a sufficient proof of our innocence? We are not conscious of any impropriety in our conduct: if we were, we would instantly reform. He assures us that our ways are clearly and expressly condemned by the gospel. *But what is this that he saith?* The scriptures are not so clear and intelligible on certain points as he pretends. Divines interpret them different ways; and what appears positive to one, does not appear in that light to others." In answer to these pretexts, by which so many endeavour to maintain the lawfulness of the maxims and customs of the world, I reply, in the first place, that the law of God is stamped on our hearts in plain and in-

delible characters : and secondly, that the perspicuity of the precepts of God contained in the scripture, is tacitly acknowledged by all.

As the subject is too copious for one discourse, I will confine my discussion to the first part, and I will prove that a candid mind cannot alledge ignorance as a justification of its disorders : that the law is deeply implanted in our nature ; and that the criminal will hereafter be judged and condemned on the testimony of his own conscience alone.

1. I cannot conceal my astonishment, when the worldling attempts to prove that he acts not in opposition to the dictates of conscience, because he experiences a certain tranquillity of mind in the midst of his enjoyments. For what proof can be deduced from this? Is peace of mind a sure and infallible sign that a man is innocent? No, to a certainty, it is not. On the contrary,

in most cases where this composure of mind is felt, as it undoubtedly is felt by many who are the most occupied with the concerns of this world, it ought to be viewed with a cautious and suspicious eye, as a matter that should rather intimidate than console them : for peace in the ways of sin, is a punishment inflicted by an angry God, and a presage of perdition. But it is not true, that he enjoys tranquillity : conscience is a tribunal to which he ought on no account to appeal ; for by no one is he so severely condemned as by himself.

I acknowledge, indeed, that there may be sinners so hardened, as to be seldom enlightened by the rays of grace and truth ; that a man may live in the abodes of darkness and sin without uneasiness and without remorse ; and that his conscience may be seared, as the apostle emphatically expresses it, (1 *Tim.* iv. 2.) But these examples of

divine justice, terrible beyond all that can be thought of, occur but seldom, and whenever they do occur, they only shew to what a deplorable and abandoned state a creature may be reduced, when, in just punishment for having forsaken his God, he is left to the workings of his own corrupt and depraved nature, and is forsaken by him.

Yes : my beloved, whether you affect to revolt openly and avowedly against the authority of the law, like the abandoned profligate ; or whether you attempt to soften its severity, and ingeniously to reconcile it with your passions by favourable interpretations, like the generality of Christians, your conscience will give testimony to the divine law, and declare that its precepts are equitable, and that the observance of them is indispensable.—In the first place, it will tell you that they are equitable. You are obliged to ac-

knowledge that God is too wise, not to love order and justice ; and that he is too good, at the same time, not to consult our well-being in all his ordinances. This you are obliged to acknowledge ; and consequently, must be fully aware that his laws are founded on justice, and command nothing but what is proper and necessary ; and that they are founded on a wise clemency, and enjoin nothing but what tends to the welfare and happiness of mankind.¹

In fact, who is there that is not convinced that meekness, humanity, temperance, chastity, and the other virtues which the gospel enjoins, are in strict conformity with the true interests of man, and are the only sources of pure delight ? and that pride, impatience, anger, intemperance, impurity, and the other vices which it condemns, are the only sources from whence unhappiness and misery flow ? We all know, and we all confess, that

the farther we stray from the bounds of duty, the more are our conflicts and anxieties increased ; and that the nearer we approach to God, the less occasion we have to be disturbed at the view of what is passing in our own interior.

In this manner do our hearts give testimony to the law of God. In vain do we throw off the yoke of obedience with a view to any earthly enjoyment. It is impossible that we can be justified in our own estimation, or reap any satisfaction from a mode of conduct of which we do not really approve. The moment of retirement and reflection will come, when we shall be left alone to commune impartially with ourselves : then it is we always take part with the law of God against the injustice of our own proceedings. Then it is we find in our souls the apology, that is there written in favour of virtue, opposed to the violence of our inordi-

nate propensities. At such a moment, nothing that we can say or do will ever bribe this interior advocate for the truth, or prevent it from pleading powerfully within us.

But to enter more into detail. In vain do we indulge the passion of hatred and revenge: we quickly discover, that the satisfaction it imparts is not congenial to the feelings of the heart, and that hatred is a self-inflicted torment. When the violence of the passion is abated, milder sentiments take possession of the breast: we are ashamed of the excess into which we had been hurried, and we admire the meekness and self-command which distinguish the character of the true Christian. Thus are we constrained to acknowledge that benignity and goodness were our original endowments, and that the law which commands us to love our neighbour, and to return good for evil, is agreeable to the most ~~to~~

ble, the most rational sentiments of the soul, and tends to reconcile us with ourselves. *Thou art more just than I*, said Saul to David in the height of his animosity. The benignity, which nature has implanted in the hearts of all men, extorted this confession, and declaimed against the injustice and severity of his revenge.

In vain do we plunge into the abyss of brutal and sensual delights : in vain do we seek with unabating ardour to satisfy our appetite for pleasure : we soon perceive that licentiousness leads us to too great lengths to be conformable with nature ; that every passion which tyrannizes over us, and brings us into subjection, is subversive of the native dignity of our immortal being, and that the gospel, by laying a restraint on our voluptuous passions, has prescribed the only means of acquiring true peace of mind, and of preserving untarnished that elevation, that noble-

ness of soul, with which our Creator primitively endowed us. How many hired servants have bread in my father's house, said the prodigal son, enslaved by the tyranny of a shameful passion, whilst I am here perishing for want in the midst of swine! (*Luke xv. 17.*) This was the feeble voice of reason, the only remnant of his noble origin, which, notwithstanding his profligacy, still whispered to his soul.

In a word, examine all the precepts of the law of God, and you will discover that they have all an intimate connection with the heart of man; that they are founded on a perfect knowledge of all that passes in our minds; that they prescribe remedies to our most secret defects, and point out the means of improving and invigorating all that is good and praise-worthy within us. — Who but the great Searcher of hearts could have delivered such precepts to mankind? The pa-

gans themselves, in whom the innate light of truth was not entirely extinguished, venerated the morality of the christian doctrine. They were constrained to acknowledge the wisdom of its laws, the necessity of its prohibitions, the sanctity of its counsels, the justness and the sublimity of its ordinances. They were surprised to discover in the discourses of Jesus a more exalted philosophy than in the schools of Greece and Rome : they could not conceive by what means the Son of Mary acquired a more perfect knowledge of the duties, the desires, and the secret inclinations of the heart of man, than their most eminent philosophers. —Yes, my beloved brethren ; so conformable are his precepts to our nature, that were they scrupulously fulfilled by all mankind, the earth would be again a paradise,—a land of peace and harmony,—a land of pure pleasures and delights ; and the whole race of

men would form one happy society, each individual rejoicing in the sweets of innocence, and all united together by the bands of universal charity and love.

With what shadow of reason, then, can it be asserted that corrupt nature is our primitive law, and that the gratifying our innate inclinations for pleasure ought not to be imputed to us as a crime? The men who stand up in support of this impiety, are themselves convinced of its falsity: this their ostentatious libertinism is only exterior, the light of truth still glimmers in their souls, and dispels the clouds of darkness which they attempt to raise. The memorable example of St. Augustine is a convincing proof. In the midst of his excesses he endeavoured to harden himself against the cries of nature and conscience; he adopted the most impious tenets; he ran into the most extravagant errors, in hopes of securing

ing his mind to the ways of sin, and of allaying the tumults of his breast. But all in vain. The light broke in upon his mind, in spite of opposition : truth was victorious ; it raised its voice in the interior of his soul, and condemned his disorders. “ I carried with me a soul torn and mangled by my passions, struggling to get loose, and impatient to be held in such a state of violence. I could not hold it ; and where to place it I knew not.” “ *Portabam crucientem, et concissam animam meam . . . impatientem portari a me, et ubi eam reponerem non inveniēbam.*” (St. Aug. Conf.).

These were the fruitless conflicts of St. Augustin before his conversion. Similar examples, of inferior notoriety, have existed in every age ; and it has been uniformly testified by all of them, that they never could efface from their minds the impressions of religion and truth ; that their hearts, even in the

midst of their extravagancies, pleaded in favour of christian morality ; and with all their impious daring in the face of the Almighty, and their senseless railing at the pusillanimity of those who bend implicitly to the dictates of virtue, they never had the fortitude to go boldly forward undaunted and unappalled in pursuit of any of the most fascinating enjoyments, with which the depraved appetite of those who are radically vicious, endeavours to console itself.

Set it down to yourselves, my beloved, as a maxim, which is invariably true, that in every vicious character there is a skulking kind of timidity,—a self-created sort of fear, which, according to the testimony of the Spirit of God, (*Wisd.* xvii. 10.) is sure to betray itself. Yes : I aver it, and nature shews it : the wicked man pays homage to the sanctity of the law which he violates, by the terrors and

disquietudes which he experiences, and which he cannot conceal. In vain does he put on the mask of heroic fortitude. In the hour of conviviality, amidst the associates of his mirth, this may do well enough : but no sooner does he retire within himself, than his mind is haunted by the most terrible phantoms which his imagination can conjure up, to upbraid him for his iniquities : sin, which he pursued with so much ardour, pursues him in its turn, and fastening on his heart, like a cruel and rapacious vulture, seems to seek, in the inmost recesses of his soul, a just and ample compensation for the short and fleeting pleasures with which the monster had itself so recently regaled him.—My God ! what a powerful advocate in favour of the beauty and equity of thy law, hast thou implanted in our very being !

2. In this manner is the sinner constrained to give testimony to the evi-

dence of the law. But this is not all. He is constrained, in the same manner, to testify, that the strict observance of the whole code of christian morality is required of every individual.

It too generally happens that those worldly Christians, who scrupulously abstain from the grosser crimes, and at the same time indulge themselves without restraint in all the pleasures and dissipations which the world is not disposed to discountenance as absolutely vicious :—it too often happens, I say, that these worldly-minded Christians endeavour to persuade themselves that they do not transgress the laws of the gospel. They even attempt to impose upon us, and declare that their conscience does not reproach them with any sin, and that they do not see how their salvation is exposed to danger. But, my beloved, this is all an illusion.

The fact is, and it cannot be con-

cealed from any of us — the fact is, that our passions are naturally headstrong; and as our propensities, arising from the corruption of our fallen nature, are bent to evil, there would be no possibility of keeping any of them within the bounds which reason, as well as religion, prescribes, were it not for some law or other to control them. None will dispute the necessity of such a restraint. Now as there can be no restraint without a proportionate degree of severity, and as no little restraint is required to keep the passions under subjection, the law which does that must, of necessity, be severe. The restraint which it imposes must be strict and general. It is clear, then, that the law of Jesus, which was instituted for no other purpose than to operate as a constant restraint upon the passions, cannot possibly be brought to give way to our inclinations in any one instance : that, as it is intended to

rectify all our propensities, it must be opposed to all: that, as it is meant to repress our corrupt desires, it cannot be supposed to accommodate itself in favour of any of them: and that, as it has professedly no other object in view, than to resist the encroachment of self-will,—to meet it by self-denial,—and finally to destroy and utterly eradicate its pernicious influence over the heart, it cannot be allowed to flatter it by any thing like that discretionary power, which is claimed by worldly-minded Christians, of gratifying the sensual appetite in any of its caprices.

Your own consciences will bear ample testimony to the truth of this statement. Can you candidly declare that you believe that the life of dissipation and luxury, which you lead, is the road to happiness? Would you dare to appear before the tribunal of God in the state in which you now are? Ah! in your more serious mo-

ments you tremble at the idea: you resolve to reform, to renounce the vanities and follies of the world, and to dedicate more time to the duties of religion. And what may be inferred from this resolution? That in your own minds you are thoroughly convinced that the gospel enjoins a much more severe mode of conduct than that which you are now pursuing.

I will appeal, moreover, to your own expressions. You severely censure those Christians who endeavour to unite the exercises of piety with the abuses and pleasures which you call innocent. You turn their devotion into ridicule: you preach up the whole severity of the gospel: you say, that a person ought to renounce the ways of the world at once, or continue to live as the world does: that all these equivocal virtues tend only to throw a scandal on true piety.—In this I agree with you. But, my dear friends, if

your consciences declare that salvation is endangered by a partial dedication of the soul to God, can you with sincerity stand up in defence of your own innocence, when no part of your hearts is dedicated to Him? You condemn the false security of those Christians, whose affections appear to be equally divided between God and the world; and can you pretend to excuse your own conduct, when it is clear that the world has engrossed the greater part, if not the whole of your affections? Can you suppose that the road to life is more rugged for those who profess to follow virtue, than for you who profess to follow vanity? Be consistent: either refrain from making any reflections on worldly piety, or do not pretend to justify a worldly life.

Another proof of your insincerity may be collected from your declamations against the expounders of the divine law. You say, that we deprive

human weakness of all hope ; that if it be necessary to observe all that we prescribe in our sermons, you ought to retire into the desarts, and live more like angels than men.—But, my beloved brethren, supposing that a minister of God were to preach to you a different doctrine from what we preach, and declare from the pulpit, that you may serve God, and love the world at the same time ; that there is no other harm in all the dissipations and pleasures of worldlings, than what the person himself is pleased to admit : that the man who lives in the world, ought to live like the world ; that crosses and self-denials are proper for the cloister, but not for you ; that God is too good to take account of those trifling liberties and gratifications, about which we attempt to raise scruples in your minds :—supposing, I say, that a minister were to preach these maxims, what would be your

opinion of his doctrine? What respect would you show to his ministry? Would you venerate him as an angel descended from heaven to illustrate the precepts of the gospel? No: you would smile either at his ignorance or his folly, or, more probably, you would express your abhorrence at his daring profanation of the word of God.

My brethren, shall the maxims, which would appear to you extravagant and irreligious when delivered from the pulpit, appear conformable to reason, and to the spirit of Christianity, when delivered by you in common conversation? You would reject them as false, as impious from the mouth of God's minister, and will they contract a greater degree of wisdom and truth by proceeding from your own lips? You would ridicule, or rather, you would entertain a bad opinion of the preacher who announced them, and can you be in earnest, or consistent, when

you so confidently maintain the lawfulness of them in your own conduct?

Ah ! how insincere are we with God ! how terrible will he appear when he shall avenge the honour of his law, according to the decisions of our own hearts ! Truly, said an apostle, if, notwithstanding our blind affection and partiality for ourselves, we cannot refrain from reprobating our conduct in private, what sentence ought we in reason to expect from the great Searcher of hearts on the day of final retribution ?

Study, therefore, the law of God, as it is written in your hearts, and you will discover that no greater indulgence is lawful than what we prescribe. Harken to the voice of truth which whispers in your interior, and you will acknowledge that we only repeat the maxims which it continually inculcates.—— In order to be enlightened in your

doubts, says St. Augustin, it is not necessary that you consult the learned: apply to your own hearts for advice; listen to their decisions; follow the first motions which they inspire, and you will always embrace the side which is most conformable to the law of God. Your unbiassed reason will reject the mitigations of self-love, and advise a stricter and more unqualified obedience to the law than we dare to advise: and if there be any need of our decisions in the end, it will be rather to moderate your severity than to reprobate any improper indulgence.

Thus are our hearts stamp'd with the broad seal of truth; and thus will they be witnesses against us hereafter at the latter day. The Lord will apply to no other source for records and proofs for the determination of our eternal lot: we shall stand before his tribunal, says Tertullian, both as the criminals and as the witnesses. "You knew the truth,"

the great Judge will say, "and you detained it in injustice: you acknowledged that they were happy who served me, and you would not serve me yourself: you painted in lively colours the ingratitude, the folly, and the vanity of the world, and you were always its senseless admirers and slaves: you respected the religion of your forefathers, and you would not practise it: you were convinced of the necessity of mortification and penance, and you sought only a life of comfort and ease: you dreaded in secret the judgments of God, and in public you affected not to believe in him."

My God! how incomprehensible are our ingratitude and folly! Thou hast fixed a light in our souls, which exposes to view the wretched state of our interior, and points out the only path to justice, truth, and happiness; and we, so far from proclaiming the wonders of thy mercies, pride our-

selves on an imaginary obedience of heart, which will, sooner or later, become real, and be a just punishment for the crime of resisting the efforts of thy love.—Give us grace, we beseech thee, to be obedient to the voice of conscience, that, under its direction, we may run on in the paths of righteousness, until we obtain possession of thy eternal promises.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF THE LAW OF
THE GOSPEL.

*When he is come, he will convince the
world of sin, of justice, and of
judgment. . . . John xvi. 8.*

THE purpose for which man was created, was no other than that he might serve and glorify his almighty Creator in this world, and enjoy him for ever in the next. As this evidently was the object of his existence: it was necessary that he should be endued with a principle of

knowledge every way proportioned to the exalted nature of his high and immortal destiny, and capable of instructing him in all the various duties which, as a rational—intelligent being, he owed to God, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself. This was imparted to him by the same beneficent Being who first drew him into life. For he enkindled in his soul a bright flame which enlightened his understanding, and sufficiently demonstrated not only the relative situation in which he stood, but all the several correspondent duties inseparably annexed to it.

In the beginning this interior light sufficed for his direction. But, in process of time, all flesh having corrupted its ways, this supernatural light was extinguished in the minds of the greatest part of mankind by the overflow of iniquity : and even the light of reason was so far obscured as to cease to be that clear, that manifest guide in

the paths of moral virtue which it had been before; and its existence in the soul seemed to produce no other effect, than that of rendering man more inexcusable. Again the mercies of God came to his relief. He, whose love seemed to increase in proportion as his creatures became ungrateful, engraved on tables of stone the law of nature, that is, the law, which he had primitively engraven on his heart, and placed before his eyes a summary of the duties which he was required to perform.

The written law, in course of time, experienced nearly the same fate: it was obscured and defaced by the interpretations of the people, with whom it was deposited.

At length the Saviour himself came down on earth. He restored it to its original purity: he dispersed the clouds of darkness, which vain wisdom, and human traditions had collected around

it: he displayed its sublimity to view, and applied its maxims to the weakness of human nature: and after having delivered his precepts to his disciples in the clearest terms, he promised to send the Paraclete, who should effectually *convince the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment.*

But, notwithstanding the communications of the word, and of the Spirit of God, it is still said that the law is ambiguous and obscure. The interpretations and sophistry of its unworthy followers have, I will not say obscured the law, but so biassed the mind, that even the world pretends that the gospel is in its favour.

But, my brethren, I will prove in this discourse, that the laws of the gospel are clear and precise, and that the sinner will be hereafter condemned both by the testimony of his own conscience, and by the evidence of the law.

1. *The commandment of the Lord,* says the royal prophet, *is lightsome, enlightening the eyes,* (Ps. xviii. 9.) : even the eyes of those, who prefer darkness before the light. We might have questioned the wisdom, and goodness of God, if the great Legislator, who came to deliver to mankind the laws of life and truth for the reformation of morals, and the regulation of duties, had drawn them up in such indefinite and obscure terms, as to be open to the interpretations of a contrary tendency, and to appear to favour the very passions, which he came to oppose and subjugate. Human laws may be defective in this point ; but it is not so with the laws of God : the charge cannot be brought against them without blasphemy. No, my beloved, our Legislator was fully acquainted with the heart of man ; he foresaw every attempt which would be made by succeeding generations to palliate

his doctrine, and explain away the precepts which were the most painful to human nature; and therefore he drew them up in a form so excellent, and so intelligible, so simple, and so sublime, that the knowledge of his will may be acquired, and the path that leads to eternal life may be discovered by men of the meanest capacity.

The incomprehensible mysteries of faith, I allow, are veiled in awful obscurity: but the regulation of morals is formal and precise; the duties of life are plain and evident. I pretend not, however, to assert that every obligation peculiar to the different states of life into which mankind is divided are specified and defined; or that no doubt can ever arise in the mind of the sincere and intelligent Christian: but it is a truth, and let me here entreat your most earnest attention, it is a truth, that, although the letter of the law does not mark out every particular

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duty, the spirit of the law is plain, and applies to all: its general maxims elucidate every difficulty: and the intention of the Lawgiver throws a clear light over every obscurity.

Thus, for instance, if you doubt whether it be contrary to the gospel to love the honours and riches of this world, to be dissatisfied with your state, to refer all your actions and desires to your temporal welfare? The gospel says, that your heart will be where your treasure is, (*Matt. vi. 21.*); that is to say, that if your treasure is in heaven, there will your heart be also. And again, that the true Christian *is not of the world*, John xvii. 16. This is sufficient to solve your doubt.

If you ask, whether the thoughtless spirit of gaiety, and the love of dissipation and pleasure (which appears so innocent in the eyes of the world) be contrary to the spirit of the true Christian? The gospel says: *blessed*

are they that mourn, (Matt. v. 5.): wo to you who laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep, Luke vi. 23, 24. Apply these maxims, and your question is answered.

If you ask, whether, living in the world, it is unlawful to live like the world;—whether we are to condemn the generality of mankind because they live in that manner; and whether the service of God requires that you adopt singularities which would expose you to the ridicule of others? To this the scriptures reply in plain terms: that you must *not be conformed to this world*, (Rom. xii. 2.): that you cannot seek to please men, and continue faithful in your allegiance to Christ, (*Gal. i. 10.*): and that the multitude do not enter the narrow path that leadeth to life, (*Matt. vii. 13.*) Again, if you doubt whether it be a duty, not only to forgive your enemy, but to see him, to love him, and to assist him with

your interest and credit? or whether it may not be more conformable to equity to reserve all your favours and benefits for your friends? The scriptures reply: *if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink; for in doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,* (Rom. xii. 20.): *love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you,* (Luke vi. 27, 28.) Enter into the spirit of these precepts, and be not ashamed to confess that they enlighten all your doubts.

In the same manner, propose any other questions that you please, and they will all be immediately solved by consulting the spirit of the law, even in cases where no intelligence can be obtained by any special reference to the letter.

Cease, therefore, to resist our ministry: and be no longer misled by the

supposition, that the abuses, against which we declaim, are not condemned by the word of God. — Ah! the word of God is sufficiently explicit to the candid and sincere Christian: it throws a clear light over every duty; and it leads him securely, and without impediment, to the gates of eternal bliss.

2. If we examine the primary causes of all these doubts, we shall discover that they originate, not in any obscurities of the law, but in the passions. For, my beloved, who are the men that appear embarrassed and perplexed? who are the men that cavil and dispute, and can never positively decide? They are men, whose interest it is to discover obscurities, — to throw a shade over every thing that is lightsome,—and to see nothing in the gospel that clearly condemns their irregularities. — The truly fervent and pious soul, who loves his God, and sincerely desires to be conformed in every thing to his holy

will, whose passions are subjected to reason, and whose affections are centered in heaven, discovers neither difficulty nor obscurity : to him the law is plain and evident ; and if, at any time, a doubt arises in his mind, it is rather a pious fear that his actions have not been divested of every imperfection, than a difficulty created for the purpose of excusing any criminal indulgence.

The light of the law, says St. Augustin, resembles the light of the sun : in vain does it shine to the blind man, in vain does it illuminate the universe : he does not see it : he is still in darkness. The sinner is this blind man : the light of truth surrounds him on all sides ; it penetrates even into the inmost recesses of his soul : but his eyes are obscured : he does not see it. Purify your hearts, continues the same holy father, take off the bandage of the passions, with which your eyes are

blindfolded, and then the whole law will appear lightsome; your doubts will be cleared, and all your difficulties will instantly vanish. Interrogate the sinner, who has been converted from the evil of his ways, and he will tell you that this is the truth: he will tell you, that his understanding was enlightened in proportion as his passions were repressed: that the duties which before had appeared ambiguous, became most evident, most incontestible: and that so great were his astonishment and alarm, that his spiritual guide, instead of being necessitated to contest, and to dispute about the extent of his duties, was obliged to conceal the terrible truths of the gospel; to apply words of comfort to his soul; and to moderate the fears, which the retrospective view of his disorders had excited.— And whence this change of sentiment? Was the law become more evident? No: that was impossible: the gospel

was not changed, but the sinner was converted, and his eyes were opened to behold the light.

Another proof of the truth of this statement may be drawn from the clear-sighted and impartial decision which sinners form on those points of the law, which do not interfere with their own favourite passions and interests. The avaricious, for example, who turn away their eyes from the precepts which condemn the insatiable love of wealth, readily acknowledge that dissipation and inordinate ambition,—passions to which they are strangers, are contrary to the spirit of the gospel. The voluptuous, who endeavour to justify the gratification of their favourite desires, condemn without mercy the low, the sordid attachment of the avaricious. The followers of the world, who exclaim against the austerity of the preacher, when he announces the rigorous precepts of the gospel, clearly

discern the least remnant of human weakness in the man who professes to follow virtue, and do not hesitate to declare that the slightest failings are incompatible with true piety. The lukewarm Christian, who avoids excess, condemns the profaneness of the libertine ; and the libertine laughs to scorn the pretended, the superficial piety of the lukewarm.

Were we to extend our examination, we should acknowledge that we can readily see, and do invariably condemn in other people, the vices to which we ourselves are not peculiarly addicted ; that we have no doubts about the spirit of the law in any case where we are not immediately concerned ; and that we exact from others the most rigorous performance of every duty which does not immediately clash with our own humour and disposition. From our own hearts, therefore, our blindness proceeds : we then only begin to

dispute our obligations, when we begin to love the maxims which are in opposition to them.

3. But let us hasten to more convincing proofs of the evidence of the gospel. You say that the law is not so explicit on certain points as we pretend. Listen for a moment to the gospel itself. We might almost consent that, of all the duties it prescribes, you should consider those only as obligatory, which are expressed in such formal and precise terms, that their meaning cannot be misunderstood : we might almost say that we require no more, and acquit you of every other duty. These are its words : *Whosoever doth not carry his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*, Luke xiv. 27.—*Whosoever doth not renounce all things that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple*, ib. 33.—*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and those that use violence bear it away*, Matt. xi. 12.

—Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he, who doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. vii. 21.—Except you do penance, you shall all perish, Luke xiii. 5.—No man can serve two masters . . . you cannot serve God and mammon, Matt. vi. 24.—Wo to you who laugh now ; because ye shall mourn and weep. Blessed are ye who weep now ; because you shall laugh, Luke vi. 25, 21.—If any one cometh to me, and hateth not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and moreover his own soul, he cannot be my disciple, Luke xiv. 26.—You, who are my disciples, shall mourn and weep, but the world shall rejoice : and you shall be sorrowful, John xvi. 20.

These, my friends, are the words of the gospel. These are its precepts. And surely they are sufficiently severe,

without any additions from me. Ah ! frail as I am, I myself stand in need of indulgence ; and were I to consult my own weakness, and accommodate to it the doctrine which I preach, I should palliate instead of exaggerating : I should speak a language more consonant to the weakness of man : I should tell you, that God was too good to punish the gratification of the propensities, which seem to be inherent in our nature : that it is not necessary to hate ourselves, in order to love God : that the man who has wealth, is at liberty to enjoy it as he pleases, and refuse himself no indulgence. This would be my language : for when left to himself, a man must necessarily speak this language of flesh and blood.—But would you believe me ? Would you respect my ministry ? Would you reverence me, as an angel descended from heaven, and commissioned to announce to you a new gospel ?

4. Were the scriptures more frequently and more attentively perused by the faithful, the severity of the law of God would be fully understood, and every pretended doubt would be removed. But, alas ! few can prevail on themselves to devote half an hour to that sacred study : and those few seldom compare their own conduct with its maxims, or regulate their lives according to its precepts. The greater number of Christians spend their days in learning vain, frivolous sciences, and neglect the book of the gospels,—the book which contains the science of salvation, the truths of redemption, and the consolations of our pilgrimage. Books are put into the hands of young people, in order to prepare them for the state of life which is designed for them ; but the book, which is to prepare them for that state which will continue for ever, is neglected and forgotten.* Histories, romances, plays, &c. amuse their

leisure hours ; but the history of the wonders of God, and of his mercies to man, does not excite their curiosity.

This being the fact, it is not surprising that so many duties are neglected, so many doubts created : it is not surprising, that the most common truths of the gospel are heard by the generality of Christians with as much astonishment, as if we were describing the religious rites and ordinances of some foreign and unknown nation.—

Yes, my brethren : if the doctrine of Jesus be as opposite to the spirit of these times, as it was of the times when it was first preached, the reason is, because the book of the gospels is either as much unknown to Christians as it was to the Pagans, or is read with as much indifference, and is laid down with as much distaste, as if it contained nothing to their purpose.—If, therefore, you sincerely desire to be enlightened, take up the scriptures ; read

them with attention and submission ; and you will soon acquire as perfect a knowledge of the extent of your duties, as your pastors themselves.

5. But supposing that the law of God were not so easy to be understood on all occasions as I have represented, what excuse could you collect from thence ? That your guilt will be palliated by the plea of ignorance ? Not at all : if men will continue to be in love with error in matters of such immense concern, and when they have so easy a remedy at hand, it can only be said that they must do it at their own peril. Never were the precepts of the gospel more ably illustrated : never had ignorance less excuse. Learning is now generally diffused ; and the pastor is fitted for his mission, by devoting the finest part of his life to application and study.

But, were you incapable of ascertaining the truth by your own means,

and your pastors were either too ignorant, or too inattentive to give you the necessary information, you, nevertheless, have the examples of the saints before your eyes. A slight examination will disclose to you the path in which they all walked. You will perceive that they all forsook the path which the world calls so secure ; that they all did penance ; that they all crucified their flesh, and renounced the world, with its pleasures and customs. You will perceive that, although manners and maxims varied with the times, the manners and maxims of the saints were always the same ; and that the saints of the last age resembled in every thing the saints of the first. You will perceive that, in nations the most distinguished from each other, both by prejudices, interests, and dispositions ; that in climes the most remote, and the most dissimilar to our own ; that, in every tongue, and in every

tribe, the saints all resembled each other : and that, although some saved their souls in the state of opulence, others in poverty, some in the distractions of dignities and public employments, others in the silence and repose of solitude, some on a dunghill, others on a throne, they all walked together in the way of the cross, of penance, and of self-denial.

With what reason, then, my beloved, can you flatter yourselves that you will be favoured by the Almighty, and conducted to heaven by a different road?—My God! how clearly dost Thou manifest the truth to all who seek to find it! How effectually hast Thou *convinced the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment!*

Why will you, therefore, oppose the triumph of grace in your souls? Why shut your eyes to that light which will fill you with consolation and joy? Since the mercies of God have not suf-

ferred you to become hardened in your sins, why repine at your happy lot? why *kick against the goad*? Be reconciled to the Lord: for by this means alone will you attain that peace and tranquillity which you seek after. Turn to what side you please, you must come to this at last. The observance of the law is the true happiness of man. The gratification of the passions increases your sorrows, and multiplies your chains: the law of God alone imparts contentment and liberty. For such is the nature of sinful man, that unless he resist his depraved inclinations, he will be wretched; and, unless he deny himself, he will neither enjoy true pleasure in this world, nor partake of that eternal peace hereafter, which is reserved for those, and only for those, who love the law of God, and keep it.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers
only, deceiving yourselves.*

James i. 22.

OF all the duties of the Christian religion, not one, perhaps, is so much attended to as that of hearing the word of God. People of all ranks and denominations, rich and poor, Catholic and sectary, all are punctual in their attendance at sermons. The places of divine worship are crowded ; public and private amusements are suspended, and all, with one

accord, assemble like the Israelites round the mountain to listen to the great law of the gospel. The duration of ages has caused no diminution of zeal in this respect.

Would to God that from this solitary act of diligence I could proceed farther, and speak with admiration of the piety and good conduct of those who assemble together on these occasions. But, alas ! notwithstanding this exterior attention to the word of God, never was it known to have less effect on the morals of mankind : never were instructions more frequent, nor more animated ; and never was piety at a lower ebb.

It is not difficult to account for this regular and systematical compliance with this one particular duty, and their total abandonment of almost every other. Christians, even of the most dissolute morals, are convinced of the truths of religion : they believe that

there is a heaven and a hell : and are well acquainted with the future destiny of those who live in the open contempt and violation of God's commandments. Terrified by the idea of giving up their souls for lost, they wish to keep up the appearances of religion, and to dispel the horrors of despair by the assurance that they have not renounced their faith and the hopes of salvation. This effect is produced by the easy, pleasing, and customary attendance at the public service : and as this is their only motive, so it is the only benefit they receive. They come neither with hearts prepared to hear the word of God with fruit, nor with the intention of regulating their conduct according to its precepts ; and, therefore, they return as tepid, and as indifferent about the more essential duties of religion as they were before.

But, my beloved brethren, *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,*

deceiving yourselves. Vain is your attendance, if you do not endeavour to fulfil the words of the law which is delivered to you.—For your instruction on a subject of this importance, I will briefly describe the dispositions of mind with which you ought to receive the word of God, if you wish to derive any real advantage from it.

1. The first disposition is a sincere desire that the truths of salvation may be profitable to you. With this view, you ought to prostrate yourselves before God, and with fervent prayers to supplicate the Father of mercies that he would enlighten your understanding with his heavenly light: that he would give to his holy word that unction and energy which it possessed when it wrought the most wonderful conversions: that he would soften the hardness of your hearts, which have so long resisted the impressions of his grace:—and that he would infuse into your

souls that spirit of docility and obedience, which will cause you to receive the word with joy, and to bring forth fruit abundantly in due season. With this view, likewise, you ought to entreat the great Giver of all good gifts that he would shower down his graces on us his unworthy ministers; and that he would animate us with that zeal, that wisdom, that dignity, that fulness of his spirit, that powerful and persuasive eloquence, which is never exerted in vain, which seeks the salvation of men more than their applauses, and which supplies for the want of abilities by the superabundance of piety and energy.

This ought to be your preparatory exercise. The Israelites were commanded by the Lord to prepare themselves by purifications, and continence during the space of three days, before they approached the mount from whence the law was to be proclaimed.

And ought not you, with greater reason, to prepare yourselves before you come to hear the truths of the new law, the law of grace,—a law as far surpassing in excellence the law of Sinaï, as the substance surpasseth the shadow? The Israelites were awed into respect by the voice of a minister from heaven, and by the thunder and lightning which accompanied his words. But are not we invested with the same power, and commissioned by the same authority as the angel? and although the ordinances we proclaim are not enforced by any marks of a visible judgment, are not the threats of eternal perdition, which we are commanded to fulminate against the unhappy prevaricators of the law, infinitely more terrible and more alarming? I say this: the light of faith displays before your eyes more powerful motives for awe and respect when you hear the word of God, than any of those visible judgments which

struck terror into the hearts of the stiff-necked Jews, and compelled them to fall prostrate on the ground at the foot of the mountain.

To this preparation you ought to add the most lively sentiments of gratitude for the blessings which you enjoy in receiving the word of life from pastors, whose authority has been transmitted to them in regular order and succession from the apostles.

The most dreadful punishment with which the Lord threatened to visit the sins of the impenitent Jews, was the depriving them of the benefit of his holy word. *They shall move*, says He, by the mouth of his prophet, *they shall move from sea to sea, and from the north to the east; they shall go about seeking the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*, Amos viii. 12. At length he executed his threats: and instead of raising up prophets in Israel as before, he permitted false teachers to se-

duce his people, and to preach to them gods unknown to any of their forefathers.

It is a singular effect of the divine mercies in your favour, that, notwithstanding the deluge of iniquity and falsehood which prevails, he continues to send amongst you pastors rightly ordained and lawfully commissioned. It is a particular mark of his providential care over you, that you have been preserved from the ways of error and schism; that you have been selected, in preference to so many thousands, to be his chosen generation, his purchased people, the inheritors of his true faith, and the partakers of his admirable light. Look around you: behold the multitudes to whom this blessing is denied: behold your relations, your friends, your acquaintance, who, by the inscrutable judgments of God, are suffered to receive the doctrine of error from the same pulpits from whence

your ancestors received the words of truth; and to be led astray by means of that same docility and religious propension, which were originally intended to facilitate their discovery of the ways of life.—Why, my beloved brethren, are not you involved in the same labyrinth of errors? Why are you permitted to inhabit the land of Gessen, and to enjoy the bright light of heaven, whilst the rest of your fellow-christians are surrounded by the darkness of Egypt? It is the effect of the pure mercy of God alone, that you are not of the assembly of those who glory in their schism; that you receive the doctrine of the apostles from the mouths of their legitimate successors; and that the waters of life and truth flow to you in a pure and unsullied stream.

And are you animated with a due sense of gratitude in consideration of this great blessing, when you present

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yourselves to hear the word of God? Is it with a holy and devout affection that you acknowledge this unmerited interposition of God's singular benevolence, when you are so happy as to receive this inestimable favour? Do you exclaim with the royal prophet: *He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them*, Ps. cxlvii. 20.—Alas! may it not be said that, instead of all this gratitude and love, the greater number of Christians are influenced only by custom and curiosity? The languor and indifference with which they are accustomed to listen to truths, which are avowedly the most clear and incontestible, and, at the same time, the most terrible and alarming of any that can be heard or thought of, are but too easily perceived: and when the attention is engaged of some, who are more regular than the rest, I call upon them

to declare whether it is not owing to the description of the vast disparity between their ways and the ways of the gospel, and not rather to the oratorical abilities of the person who delivers it?

Beloved Christians, be no longer the victims of tepidity and sloth. Prepare yourselves by prayer, and entertain a due sense of the blessing which you are going to receive from God; and after this preparation you will not fail to listen with that spirit of submission and respect, which the sanctity of the law requires. This is the second consideration which I mean to treat upon.

2. The word which we announce is of divine authority. It is not our own gospel that we preach, but the gospel of Jesus. No sooner were we appointed to his ministry, than you were bound to respect us as envoys, commissioned to treat with you in his

name about the great affair of your salvation. We carry, indeed, the treasure of his word in weak vessels ; but it is neither less sublime, nor less worthy of your attention on that account. Although, like the earthen vessels, which were the arms of Gideon against the city of Jericho, we return a harsh and disgusting sound, nevertheless, the truth, (that concealed lamp, which the Almighty has fixed within us) is the truth descended from heaven ; and, like the lamps of Gideon, is designed to strike terror into the hearts of unrepenting sinners.

To this divine word, therefore, it is your duty to attend with docility, and to attend, not as judges, but as disciples. Before this altar the precepts of the gospel, the laws of the Church are detailed : and they are detailed, not for your approbation or criticism, but for your instruction.

Is it with this spirit, my beloved, that you are animated ? Do you come

to the holy temple with a sincere resolution of regulating your conduct according to the maxims which will be delivered to you? Alas! how many are there who come with a predetermination to resist the truths of the gospel: who attribute our zeal to the effects of enthusiasm, and who coolly admire the vehemence of our harangues, as if it were nothing more than an attempt at declamatory eloquence! How many are there, who seem to think that the doctrine we preach is merely the doctrine of the pulpit, and not of the gospel; and that the duties we prescribe are only imaginary duties, and not the duties incumbent on every Christian! These people come to dispute with God, and to weaken the power of his word: they come to maintain the cause of the world and of their disorderly affections, in the holy place which was erected to be the inviolable asylum of truth and virtue.

But, my deluded brethren, if there are any of this description in this assembly, on what is your opinion founded? Are you sufficiently conversant with the scriptures, to discover the exaggerations and forced conclusions of which you so boldly accuse us? Is it apparent that we adopt this style of eloquence either through interest, or through any other temporal motive? Ah! my God, Thou, perhaps, wilt hereafter declare that we weakened the power, and destroyed the efficacy of thy holy word, because we did not meditate on it with sufficient leisure at the foot of thy altar! Thou, perhaps, wilt hereafter rank us amongst the workers of iniquity, because the tepidity and irregularity of our lives deprived it of that holy unction and vehemence, which it can receive only from the hallowed lips of the mortified and evangelical pastor!

But how can we add to the terrors of

the gospel? Is it not sufficiently alarming of itself, without additions from us? Did St. Paul exaggerate, when he discoursed on justice, chastity, and the great judgment to come, and by the fire of his words struck terror into the heart of Festus, the idolatrous Roman governor? Did St. Paul exaggerate, when the thunders of his eloquence terrified the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities, and compelled them, as it were, to bring their lascivious and impious books, striking their breasts, and drowned in tears, and to make a sacrifice of them to the Lord?

You say that we exaggerate! But what motive could induce us to have recourse to such a disgraceful artifice? Are we, like the ancient philosophers, desirous of extending the circle of our disciples, by preaching a superior wisdom, or a more rigid morality than other people? No, beloved brethren:

you know the dispositions, you know the heart of the christian pastor. You know ^{that} he would gladly lighten the yoke, instead of increasing its weight: and that he would willingly soften down every asperity in the paths of virtue, instead of creating imaginary obstacles. You know, that like the good shepherd in the gospel, he would take you on his shoulders, if possible, and carry you through the fatiguing wilds of the desert. You know this: you know that our only desire, our only solicitude is the salvation of your souls; and that, in compliance with our duty, we are always ready to alleviate your sufferings, and to stretch forth a helping hand to you in all your infirmities.

You have only to open the book of the gospels, and you will immediately discern the veil of discretion, which we draw over the severity of its maxims; you will be inclined to accuse us of in-

roducing too many relaxations, out of regard to the weakness and imbecility of the times: you will say to yourselves what we are afraid to say, lest you should not be able to bear it: you will say: "Good God! what! carry my cross daily!—despise the world, and all it contains!—live like a stranger on the earth!—live for Thee alone!—renounce every thing that flatters self-love—incessantly deny myself!—call those happy who mourn and are afflicted!—yes: this is thy holy law, and my salvation depends on the exact observance of it." What addition can be made by human ingenuity to the severity of this doctrine? What could we announce to you that would be more repugnant, or more formidable to self-love? Your censures, therefore, are unfounded: they are nothing more than the vain language of the world,—a way of speaking, which no

one examines, and which every one adopts ;—a language, which not one of you can assent to in private ; for, when you candidly express your sentiments, you confess that we have not exceeded the truth, and that the gospel preaches more severely against the world and its admirers, than we who are so often condemned for the severity of our strictures.

Thus, my brethren, you see that, instead of exclaiming against the rigour of our doctrine, it is your duty to receive the word with docile and humble hearts, and to apply to yourselves the prohibitions and precepts which the true and indelible word of the gospel is known to inculcate. It is the duty of every individual to place, as it were, his soul before him ; to examine her inclinations, with all her customary habits and failings, and to judge her according to the law, from which there can

be no appeal or subterfuge whatever, and which is here definitively laid down as strictly obligatory on all; and to ascertain whether she is defiled with the vices which it condemns, or whether she be adorned with the virtues in full perfection, which it recommends and enforces. It is the duty of every individual to be as attentive to the holy maxims, which are announced to all, as if they were addressed to him alone: to be as respectful and submissive as if Jesus himself were visibly present, and speaking to him: and to be as grateful, and as much affected, as if he were assured that we were sent for the express purpose of instructing him alone in the truths of salvation. This, my brethren, ought to be your invariable rule; and then the word of God would be a seed springing up in your souls unto life eternal.

But, alas ! by whom is this rule ob-

served? No one seems to be personally interested: no one appears to be conscious of the crimes against which we inveigh. One would think that we were preaching before an assembly of saints, free from weakness, free even from the appearance of sin: and that the sinner was an imaginary character, which we set up merely as an object to declaim against. The lascivious man does not condemn himself, even when we pass the severest sentence on the abettors of his favourite passion. The man, who has amassed a treasure of ill-gotten wealth, readily subscribes to the condemnation of the extortioners and the unjust, but never includes himself in the number of the guilty. The master, the servant, the mechanic, exclaim against oppression, dishonesty, and fraud, when we discuss those subjects; but the same defects in themselves they palliate, either by the trite

excuse of human weakness, or by the plea of custom and necessity. In a word, to view himself on the most favourable side, and to avoid a minute inspection into his whole character, seem to be the objects of every one's attention. As things are, it is in vain to point out, even in the clearest manner, who is the infringer of the law: his own portrait, though drawn out distinctly before him, and at full length, will not help him to a discovery. He sees no likeness at all in it; or at least, he pretends to descry some difference of shades in the colouring; and pleased with his sagacity and discernment, he hastily concludes that he is not the person it was intended for. Although the resemblance be correct and striking in the opinion of those around him, he alone either does not see, or rashly attempts to trace a more correct resemblance in the fea-

tures of his neighbour. Thus, the guilt of satirical and malignant applications is the only fruit which he reaps from our labours : he judges others unjustly, when he ought to pass sentence on himself.—In this manner, O God, does the sinner reject every blessing : thus does the light of truth close his eyes to his own defects, and open them to descry in the conduct of his neighbour either imaginary failings, or failings to which they ought to have been forever shut.

Let not this, my beloved friends, be said of you. Enter seriously into yourselves, and endeavour to fulfil this important duty in the best manner possible. Prepare your souls beforehand to receive the seed of wisdom and justice ; and be animated with the warmest sentiments of gratitude for the blessing which is so liberally bestowed upon you. Remember that the word,

which we announce, is the word of God, and that its sanctity requires perfect docility and submission on your part. Remember, that it is your duty to apply to your own wounds the general remedies we prescribe, and to endeavour to reap every possible advantage from every discourse. It may not unfrequently happen that the preacher is unacquainted with the beauties of oratory, and the charms of delivery ; but let your piety excuse every defect. Your primary object is the word of God : and the word of God is delivered to you by the imperfect speaker, as well as by the complete orator. Attend to the truth, and not to the arrangement of sentences. Be ye doers of the words, and not the listless admirers of eloquence. By these means you will acquire a perfect knowledge of your duties : you will be enabled by the grace of God to fulfil

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them: and you will be hereafter entitled to a participation of the promises which we here so imperfectly announce to you.

THE ASCENSION.

ON THE DANGERS OF TEMPORAL PROSPERITY.

*They . . . asked him, Lord, wilt thou
then at this time restore again the
kingdom to Israel ? Acts i. 6.*

IT is astonishing, that the apostles, the pillars of the faith, the founders of the Church of all ages and nations, should be so little acquainted with the mysteries of heaven, as to expect the restoration of the temporal kingdom of Israel, even at the very moment when our Lord was preparing to take his final departure hence, and

to enter into his glory. It is astonishing that, after they had witnessed the miracles, and heard the doctrine of their divine Master ; after they had been repeatedly assured that his kingdom was not of this world ; that they were to be poor and contemned ; that the world should laugh, but that they were to mourn and weep ;—it is astonishing, I say, that they should still be prepossessed with the idea of his manifestation being finally attended with earthly pomp and splendor, and that they should continue their solicitations for its speedy accomplishment even to the last moment of his visible existence on earth. *Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel ?*

But the great mystery of man's redemption has been since developed, and the object of the incarnation has been fully manifested. We know that He came on earth to teach us, both by

word and example, that the pleasures and riches of this world are unworthy of our affections: we know that He endured the death of the cross, to teach us that salvation is not to be attained by a life of comfort and sensual enjoyment; and we know that He is now ascended into heaven, in order to disengage our souls from the love of this perishable world, and to draw them thither after Him.

This knowledge has been instilled into our minds from our earliest infancy. But what effect has it hitherto produced? What, in fact, are we the better for it? Do we not still continue, like the apostles, to sigh after earthly things? Ah! why will we not listen to the voice of truth, which assures us that riches, and honours, and pleasures, are more to be dreaded than courted; that, although the delusive charm of pomp and gaiety may seem to enliven the paths of this earthly pilgrimage, it

is calculated only to divert our thoughts from our true country, to retard our progress towards it, and ultimately to prevent our arrival at it.

A few reflections on this subject, I hope, will contribute to soothe the cares and solitudes of those whom God has placed in a state of poverty and affliction, and to raise the affections of those in affluence, from the dangerous objects of vanity and folly, to the more noble possessions of eternity.

The smiles of the world, 'says St. Augustin, are more dangerous than its frowns; its favours are more pernicious than its censures and contempt. This maxim is founded, first, on the extreme difficulty of avoiding irregularity and excess in the enjoyment of wealth; and secondly, on the innumerable and almost insurmountable obstacles which prosperity throws in the way of repentance.

1. Every Christian, according to the gospel, is required to live as a stranger on earth: his hopes, his crown, his inheritance, are in heaven: his heart must be where his treasure is. If he intermit his sighs after this his true country, he ceases to belong to the world to come, to the Church of the First-born: if he be delighted with his exile, he is unworthy of his high destiny. His piety is nothing, unless it be animated by the desire of enjoying God; his merit depends wholly on his most anxious and unremitted endeavours to prepare himself for that happy state: and his consolations ought to be no other than those which arise from a well-founded hope, that success will at length crown all his labours.

This is the essential character of a true Christian. Now, my brethren, in what state or condition of life is this character the most easily acquir-

ed ? in the state of poverty, or in the state of affluence ? It requires no very serious reflection, I should think, to be convinced that the poor and afflicted can easily refrain from loving what they cannot enjoy ; that they may withdraw their affections without difficulty from a world which has never favoured them with its smiles ; and that they can hardly consider themselves otherwise than as strangers in a place where they possess little or nothing. Yes : true it is, that religion presents itself before them in the most engaging form : it becomes their sweetest occupation : it soothes their labours, and alleviates their pains : it consoles them under all their privations and miseries, by the assurance that this world is not their true country ; that nothing here is withheld from them but that which it is not lawful for them to love ; that the true wealth of a Christian is within ; — a treasure, in-

deed, which cannot be wrested from them against their will ; that the loss of grace is the only real loss they can possibly sustain ; that it is of little consequence whether they possess or be in want of those things, which they cannot keep for ever ; and that the most desirable condition on earth, is the one which attaches them the least to a world, which they are not permitted to love.

These sentiments naturally present themselves to the mind of the poor and afflicted disciple of Jesus. But it is not so with the affluent and the prosperous. For, let me ask, what inducements are there to compel the rich man to dislike a situation where all is pleasing ? How can he live as a stranger in a land flowing with delights ? What is there to induce him to turn away from the world, which lavishes its favours on him ? What can deter

him from fixing his tabernacle in a place where every thing is so very commodious and inviting? Is it not almost repugnant to nature, that he should lament the length of his pilgrimage with the prophet, when he has nothing that is painful or burthensome to complain of? Is it not almost impossible that he should advance steadily on without stopping, towards his true country, when there are so many pleasing objects on the road to engage his attention? Will he not be almost irresistibly inclined to rejoice, like the foolish man in the gospel, in the possession of his immense stores; to adopt a life of indolence and ease; and to say to his soul: *My soul thou hast goods for many years, take thy rest?* Yes, my beloved, both reason and experience prove, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that wealth attaches the mind to earthly things,

and strongly induces the possessor to seek for happiness in the enjoyment of creatures.

And where, I shall perhaps be asked, is the criminality of this disposition? I reply with St. Augustin, that its criminality is manifold and evident: the lovers of this world would gladly immortalize themselves on earth: they would not regret their eternal separation from God, provided they could enjoy without satiety, and without disturbance, the pleasures of flesh and blood: and, if they were permitted to choose between earth and heaven, the present world and the world to come, the creature and the Creator, they would immediately declare in favour of the first. They are not even entitled to the name of Christians; for the Christian is a child of the promises,—an inhabitant of a higher and much happier world,—a citizen of heaven,—a portion of Christ: the Christian sighs

incessantly for his reunion to that mystical body of which he is a member : whereas, on the contrary, the desires of worldlings are centered in the earth ; the expectations of the just, the prospect of eternal happiness, excite not a pleasing thought in their breasts, when compared with the pleasure which is created by the prospect of any worldly enjoyments.—I will not press this subject any farther. Enough has been said to convince you of the criminality of the disposition above mentioned.

This, my beloved, is the first effect of temporal prosperity ; — an effect which exposes the salvation of the rich man to the greatest danger. Happy are you, therefore, you, among my present auditory, on whom the world does not smile. Be not grieved at your distresses and wants ; but rather return thanks to God, who has placed you in this state of humiliation

and suffering, in order that your affections may be withdrawn from a vain and perishable world, and fixed on Him, who on this day ascends to prepare a place for you in the mansions of eternal happiness.

Prosperity is, likewise, obnoxious to christian piety in another respect ; it contributes to the support of self-will,—the most determined enemy and opposer of the will of God. The gospel informs us that we must hate ourselves in this world ; or, in other words, that, as sin originates in the superiority which self-love gains in our affections over the love of God, it is the duty of every Christian to watch the motions of his heart, and to guard against the encroachments of his irregular desires, as against the encroachments of an enemy.—This is a work of difficulty, even in the lowest state of life : but in the state of wealth and opulence, the difficulty is increased

more than an hundred-fold. The rich man is empowered, and of course continually tempted to gratify his corrupt inclinations. The inactivity of his life, and the want of that regular employment which is necessary for the well-being of our fallen nature, leave a vacuity in his mind,—a vacuity which, unless it be filled up by works of piety and virtue, is almost an irresistible inducement to dissipation and thoughtless gaiety. This, as we unfortunately experience, is too generally the case. The chief resource of the rich man is pleasure. This is the main object of his life. His whole mind is bent upon this one attainment : all his thoughts, all his desires, all his actions are directed to this one point. By continual indulgence he contracts a fatal habit, which is soon formed into a second nature. In process of time, he is unable to make the least resistance to self-will : he can refuse no gratification to his irregular

desires : he violates without scruple any of the known commandments of the Church that border upon the least restraint : and frequently the extravagant excess, into which he is hurried, induces him to pay to his own ungovernable will a tribute of homage and submission every way as great as any which the devout man is accustomed to pay to the Lord of Glory. This, perhaps, may appear to border upon exaggeration. But, my beloved, in what does the devotion of the just man to God surpass the devotion of the worldling to himself ? The one refers all his actions to God, the other refers all his actions to himself : the one lives only for God, the other lives only for himself ; the one despises every thing in which God has no share, the other is indifferent about every thing in which his own interest or pleasure are not concerned ; the one is indefatigable in his exertions to please God, the other is

indefatigable in his exertions to please himself. The parallel might be continued ; but this is sufficient to convince you that there is no exaggeration, and that *self* is as much the idol and divinity of the man of the world, as the Lord is the God of those who are his faithful servants.—If temporal prosperity, therefore, be productive of such infinite evils, is it at all expedient for us that this should become the object of our sighs and wishes ? No : in a temper of mind better suited to the prospect that is before us, let us say : Blessed are the poor and afflicted, because their distresses secure them from the pernicious effects produced by independence and ease.

2. In this manner does the light of faith display before our eyes the temptations and dangers which surround the possessors of wealth. I will now proceed to the second part of my sub-



ject, in which I will establish a point of still greater moment, namely, that the obstacles which are thrown in the way of repentance, are much greater in a state of opulence, than any that are usually to be met with in a state of poverty.

In the first place, the rich man is not favoured with extraordinary graces so plentifully as the man who walks in the humble paths of life. You have only to open the sacred volume, and you will instantly be convinced of the truth of this position. In every page the Almighty has declared, both by word and example, that his delight is to be with the humble and the simple : that he turns away from the high and mighty : that he breaks the bow of the strong, and gives his strength to the weak : that he suffers the herb on the house top to wither and die, and does not favour it with the dews of heaven on account of its exalted situation, while

he clothes with beauty the lilies of the valley, although situated in the midst of brambles : that he breaks the cedars of Lebanon, which glory in their strength, while the tree planted by the water-side, is made to bring forth its fruit in due season. This he particularly exemplified in the selection of his apostles : the noble and the wealthy he passed by unnoticed, and entrusted the most important commission that was ever given, to men the most illiterate, and of the lowest extraction. I pretend not, however, to insinuate that there is any exception of persons with God : far from it : the treasures of his grace are open to all : no one is rejected, who returns to him : and there have been examples of eminent sanctity on the throne, as well as in the cottage.

But the order of Providence seems to require that there should be some compensation for the inequality of

states and conditions among mankind : and that, in the confusion in which every thing appears on earth ; where the sinner is raised to honour, and the just man suffered for the most part to linger in poverty and affliction, there should be discernible to the eye of faith, an over-ruling providence, and a wisdom of counsels on the part of God in the distribution of temporal blessings among his creatures. The awful secret of this divine compensation is, that the riches of grace are, as it were, the portion and inheritance of the poor and afflicted, whilst the prosperous man is suffered to enjoy undisturbed the things of the earth : or, in other words, that innocence, purity, uprightness, simplicity, and the fear of the Lord are the virtues of the humble poor, whilst titles, dignities, and human grandeur are abandoned to the powerful and haughty possessors of earthly domains. In this manner is

every thing in the universe arranged with an economy worthy the great Author of nature. In this manner is the abundance of the one established with a view of administering relief to the necessities of the other : the rich are appointed to relieve the corporal wants of the poor ; and the poor to succour the rich by their spiritual benedictions, and by the sacrifice of their prayers and sufferings.

In the second place, extraordinary graces are not imparted so liberally to the affluent, because it too frequently happens that temporal blessings are allotted to them by the great Judge as the only recompense due to the good works which they have performed. It is not uncommon for the sinner by the mere influence of natural dispositions, to be oftentimes sincere, affable, guiltless in his speech, and equitable in his dealings, a good master, a tender husband, a faithful friend, and an enemy.

to injustice and oppression : but this is not sufficient, it is the spirit that quickeneth and giveth life, and unless his works are animated by this spirit of divine charity, he will not be entitled to an eternal recompense. Nevertheless he performs good works : for by means of the virtues which he possesses, the peace of empires, the harmony of private families, the security of commercial dealings, and the very existence of civil society are maintained. I say he performs good works, and therefore he is entitled to a reward : for so exact are the scales of unerring justice that no virtue can pass unrewarded, as on the other hand, no vice can remain unpunished. But what is this reward ? Alas ! it is nothing more than a temporal reward : he was influenced only by temporal motives, and therefore a temporal recompense is all that he has a right to look for : he was ambitious only of worldly blessings, and therefore worldly blessings

are awarded to him. But these rewards strike terror into the heart of the true believer, who considers them as marks of the privation of extraordinary grace, and as favours which God dispenses in his wrath.

I acknowledge, indeed, that this economy of divine Providence is not invariable : for it does occasionally happen that men whose lives are remarkable for true piety, are seen to enjoy peace in their stength, and abundance in their towers. (*Ps. cxxi. 7.*)

But these are only exceptions, and are consequently insufficient to inspire any one with confidence. You, particularly, my brethren, if you make no other use of your prosperity, than to promote the reign of sensual pleasure, to live in luxury and in the forgetfulness of God, you, I say, have reason to tremble, and, instead of indulging vain hopes, to address these words to yourselves: “perhaps I am receiving my

consolation in this world: this at least I know, that salvation is the affair, which I have least of all been in the habit of attending to. I run on from sin to sin, and never seriously reflect on repentance and a change of life: I feel a solicitude for my friends, for my relatives, for my country; but for thee, my God, and for the eternal welfare of my soul, I feel the utmost indifference and unconcern. Oh! wouldst thou thus heap temporal blessings on me, and abandon me interiorly, were I of the number of the just? Chastise me rather on earth, and reserve for me those favours which will continue for ever. If riches are impediments to my salvation, take them from me: I would rather sit with Job on a dunghill, than with Solomon on a throne, if my eternal welfare required it: that state I prefer, which will draw me the nearest to thee." The necessity, as well as the use of entering into some such sentiments as

these, is clearly seen and clearly understood. These are matters which can escape none of us.

Again, the fountains of grace are opened with more reserve to the rich, because it too frequently happens that the state of affluence is not the state which the merciful designs of Providence had intended for them; but which he permitted them to attain to in compliance with their inordinate ambition.—Instead of asking wisdom of the Lord, like Solomon, they were solicitous only for wealth. God saw the dispositions of their hearts, and in his wrath was propitious to their desires. But, as a punishment for this unworthy preference of Mammon before him, he leaves them to struggle with the dangers of a state which they had chosen for themselves, and regardless of the manner in which they choose to proceed, seems not to interest himself in the final issue of their conflict.

Lastly, prosperity is an obstacle to repentance on account of the present comforts and enjoyments which it imparts to the possessor.—The man who is rich, and in want of nothing, is generally desirous of enjoying the good things which he has acquired. His attention, consequently, is diverted from the world to come: he has attained the summit of his wishes; and his solicitude for a long and peaceable possession of his wealth removes every solicitude about future happiness. Nothing but crosses and afflictions can rouse such a man from his spiritual lethargy: he must experience the vanity and inconstancy of all earthly things before he will be induced to despise them: he never will fly for comfort and relief to the great Author of his existence, so long as he can extract sufficient enjoyment from creatures. Manasses did not turn to God, until the horrors of a dungeon had

made him enter into himself. The prodigal son did not return to his father, until the severities of want had opened his eyes to behold the crime which he had committed against heaven.

Such, my beloved, are the dangers which are usually attendant on a state of prosperity and opulence. Of all conditions in life this is by far the most perilous. It facilitates and encourages the indulgence of every passion, and it opposes almost insurmountable obstacles to sincere repentance.

Open your eyes, therefore, to the true nature of all that is present before you, and be convinced that wealth is not the proper object for the ambition of a soul that is truly christian. Heaven alone is worthy of your solicitude: there is your treasure, and there let your affections be centered. Behold your ascending Jesus: follow him with the eyes of faith into the celestial

mansions, and learn to place a just value on the glorious inheritance :—the eternal kingdom which he has prepared for you. Instead of fixing your desires on *the restoration of the kingdom of Israel*, that is, on worldly pomp and splendor ; let it be the constant solicitude of the rich to lay up a store for themselves, in the place where neither moth nor rust can consume, by alms-deeds to the poor ; and let the poor console themselves with the assurance that God is ready to enrich them with the treasures of grace in proportion to their want of temporal blessings. Let both rich and poor be assured, that the less consolation they receive in this world, the more they may reasonably expect to receive in the world to come ; and that, on the bed of death, they would not exchange the merit which they shall have acquired by the patient endurance of affliction and pain, for the possession of all the crowns and sceptres

in the world.——Meditate on these great truths, my christian friends, and in whatever situation Providence has placed you, endeavour so to comply with all the various duties of your situation in the present life, as not to lose the benefit of them in the life to come.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE FERVOUR OF THE PRIMITIVE
CHRISTIANS.

If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God: if any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God adminstereth: that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter iv. 11.

HAPPY, my beloved friends, were the times when maxims of the most sublime sanctity were eagerly embraced by persons of all ranks and conditions in the chris-

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tian church, and nothing could equal the extraordinary fervour of their inspired preachers, exhorting them to the truest holiness, but the zeal and alacrity of those who heard them. Then was christian piety known and sought after : — then did fervour and charity abound : — then was the Church an assembly of saints : — then the apostle commanded, and was obeyed : — then, *if any man spoke, he spoke as the words of God ; if he ministered, he ministered as of the power which God administereth ; and in all things was God honoured through Jesus Christ.*

But those happy times are no more. The spirit of tepidity and languor has pervaded the whole christian world ; hardly is there a trace of primitive fervour to be found. How alarming is the comparison between the former and the present times ! how justly may we fear that the days are approaching

when faith will with difficulty be found on earth!—The subject, however, is pleasing. We love to hear the virtues of our forefathers rehearsed; and we readily applaud and commend their piety, although our applauses and commendations infer a tacit condemnation of ourselves. We will, therefore, take a retrospective view of the state of christian discipline in the first ages of the Church; and I hope that the display of the penitential piety of our ancestors will animate your zeal, and induce you to labour in earnest, like them, in the great cause of God and of your own souls.

The origin of the Catholic Church bears no resemblance to the origin of the churches of error and schism. The rise and progress of these were, without exception, attended with degrading and dishonourable circumstances. Pride and libertinism were the primary motives of the establishment of them

all; and, on that account, their disciples draw a veil over the times that presided over their birth, in order to conceal the passions which produced their existence, and which fostered and supported them in their infant years. Like the dishonoured offspring of illegal connection, they are confused and abashed when we remind them of their extraction.

But we, my beloved, we can say with confidence: *recall to mind the former days*, Heb. x. 32. The commencement of the Catholic Church was the period of her greatest fervour and piety.

Recall to mind, therefore, those days when the Church, adorned with the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, appeared without spot or wrinkle. Under a mean and sorrowful exterior, she shone with a splendor, at once heavenly and divine. Sufferings and reproaches were the ornaments of her dignity: and,

although trodden under foot by persecutors, she was a spectacle worthy both of angels and men.

Recall to mind those happy days, when the Church was one great assembly of saints : when the weaker sex were superior to the united powers both of earth and hell : and when religion formed out of the lowest and most illiterate of mankind, wise men and heroes, whom philosophy had never equalled in the schools of Greece and Rome.

Recall to mind that primitive fervour, when innocence of morals was the crime, if the expression may be allowed, by which the Christian was distinguished : and when non-conformity to the maxims of a corrupt world, and aversion to public amusements, were the marks by which he was discovered, and the causes of his being denounced before the tribunal of a persecuting tyrant.

Recall to mind that severe discipline

which subjected public transgressors to public chastisements : when the scandal of the offence was effaced by the display of the repentance : when long and severe works of expiation were embraced as an indulgence : when sinners solicited as a favour the most rigorous penance : when prostrate in the porch of the temple, covered with sackcloth and ashes, and secluded from the presence of the holy altar, they spent years in the exercises of humiliation and suffering ; and at length, received the kiss of peace and reconciliation, not as the reward due to their protracted austerities, but as the effect of the tender mercy and clemency of the Church in their favour.

The recollection of those happy times ; the view of the immense dissimilarity between our forefathers and ourselves, between their fervour and our tepidity, between the innocence of their lives, and the depravity of our

own, between their austerities and our sensualities, between the tears and severities of their repentance, and the cold and languid process of ours, are more than sufficient motives to strike terror into our souls, and to make us tremble for our salvation.

The Church, it is true, no longer exacts the same long and public proofs of repentance before she admits her children to the sacrament of reconciliation. External discipline has changed in this respect: for, the number of sinners increasing with the number of believers, it was impossible to separate them all from the society of their brethren, and subject them to public penance. Alas! were we now to exclude from the holy mysteries the unclean, the fornicators, the adulterers, the profane swearers, the detractors, and the other sinners, who were formerly subjected to canonical penance, where would be the assembly of the saints?

But the change that has taken place is only in the external polity of the Church: the spirit of her laws is still the same as formerly. Although the fervour of the faithful has relaxed;—although the multitude of the guilty has rendered the duration and publicity of penance impracticable;—although prudence has dictated a mitigation of the discipline, which primitive zeal had established; the eternal law of God is fixed and immutable: the obligation of severe penance is inseparable from the gospel: it is appointed for all times and places: and the relaxation of morals, so far from lessening the necessity, renders the observance the more indispensable.

Whether, therefore, the canonical laws of the Church are in force or not, the laws of God continue to exact as severe a course of atonement for sin, as they did in former times. Even the innocent and undefiled are not ex-

empted from the obligation of penance. Every Christian is required to crucify his flesh with its vices and concupiscences: every Christian is bound to deny himself without ceasing, to carry his cross daily, to pluck out the eye which scandalizeth him, and to take heaven by violence.

The mere title of Christian imposes this penance even on the guiltless disciple. But we, my beloved, we are not of this number: we are sinners: and consequently we are bound not only to offer violence to ourselves, and to crucify our flesh, but to expiate past crimes;—to humble ourselves in the dust at the feet of an injured God;—to root out inveterate habits:—in a word, to submit to all the severities of penance which the law exacts from sinners. These are ordinances, which times, manners, and customs can neither change nor make obsolete.

Now, my brethren, have your lives

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been hitherto regulated according to the maxims of this immutable law? Do you perform even the penance that is required of the innocent? Do you live conformable to the gospel, as becomes the disciples of a crucified Saviour? Do you renounce sensual pleasures? Do you mourn? Do you receive afflictions with thanksgiving? Are you meek and humble of heart? Do you bear in your bodies the mortification of Christ Jesus? Do you hate the world? Do you fly from its allurements? Do you watch and pray continually?—This is the penance of the innocent. Without this conformity to the gospel, were you more chaste than Susanna, more irréprehensible than Judith, more charitable than Cornelius, you would be lost.

But, alas! you are neither chaste, nor irréprehensible, nor temperate. You owe to the divine justice the sum of ten thousand talents. You have in-

curred the obligation of expiating criminal and shameful pleasures, of removing scandals, and of purifying your consciences from their defilements. Your penance, consequently, must be of far greater extent than the penance above described. But what is this penance, perhaps, you will say?

Ah! were you desirous and capable of proportioning your penance to the justice of God, this should be my answer: contemplate the sanctity and the majesty of Him whom you have offended:—fix your eyes on the terrible judgments, which he formerly inflicted on people whose crimes, perhaps, were not more enormous than yours,—the whole universe overwhelmed by the waters of the deluge,—Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire from heaven,—the discontented Israelites swallowed up alive,—a simple violation of the Sabbath punished with death,—Moses

himself excluded from the land of promise on account of a momentary act of diffidence, — the Great Victim of propitiation, the Lamb of God, *in whom he was well pleased*, suffering unutterable torments, in order to effect our reconciliation: consider all this, I would say; and proportionate your penance accordingly.

But were I to insist upon this, I should dishearten you, because I should advise a course of penance which far exceeded the powers of mortal man. I will, therefore, allow that a milder course, — a course more compatible with the weakness of your nature, may be sufficient to effect your reconciliation. But what is this milder course? No other than that which was followed by the illustrious penitents of former ages. They spent whole years in humiliations and prayer: the Church imposed on them fasts, austerities, and privations of the most painful nature.

Your sins, probably, are not inferior to theirs; your course of atonement, consequently, must not be less severe.

I acknowledge, indeed, as I said above, that the Church has long ceased to exact these public testimonies of repentance. But severe penance is not less indispensable on that account. Necessity has obliged her to relax in the severity of exterior discipline; but her spirit is still the same. She declares that you are bound to impose on yourselves proportionate mortifications in private: and although she allows you to be your own judges, she admonishes you that it is your duty to judge yourselves now, as you will be judged hereafter.

This, dear Christians, is consonant with reason. For, why should these times be more favourable to the sinner than the primitive times? Why should less penance be necessary for you, than it was for the first Christians? Does

the justice of God require less? No : in God there is no change, nor shadow of alteration : all changes around Him, but He is always the same. Are your crimes less enormous than the crimes of the primitive Christians? Alas ! they were strangers to the defilements which you contract without scruple : they frequently did public penance for a single fault : and can you suppose, that, after a life spent in iniquity and sin, you are more entitled than they were to a mitigation of atonement?—Were crimes less excusable in the first Christians, and on that account deserving of greater punishment? Far otherwise : the state of idolatry, in which they were born,—the immoralities of paganism, in which they were educated,—the excesses authorized by the religion which they had hitherto professed, tended to extenuate the guilt of those faults into which they fell after their conversion. You, on the contra-

ry, you were washed in the laver of baptism in your early infancy : you were educated in the holy discipline of self-denial : you were confirmed in the horror of sin, both by instruction and example. Your crimes, therefore, are more offensive to God, because they are attended with greater ingratitude. — Can any excuse be alledged from the prevalence of wickedness in these latter times ? Ah ! the multitude of the guilty neither changes the nature of sin, nor restrains the arm of the Almighty. The whole race of mankind, in the days of Noah, were destroyed by the deluge, no less than the unhappy Achan, who, in the capture of Jericho, was the only one accursed in Israel.

Can it be said, that the fervour of the primitive times encouraged the faithful to submit to the rigours of penance : but that, the difficulties being now increased by the universal decay

of piety, less is expected from you? What! my beloved, do you imagine that more was required from the first Christians because they were fervent and zealous; and that less is required of you, because you are tepid and indifferent? If this were the truth, the compunction of those good men would have been their misfortune, since it would have subjected them to greater punishment: and our slothful tepidity would be a blessing, since it would diminish the labours of penitential atonements. But who will subscribe to such an assertion?

No: my beloved brethren, be not deceived, religion never changes. The spirit of the Church is invariably the same. The hatred, which God bears to sin, is never diminished: his justice always exacts the same reparation. The gospel never alters; and, although times and customs change, the duties of a Christian never can. The path to

life was narrow in the first ages ; it will, consequently, never be broad and commodious :—the kingdom of heaven suffered violence in those times ; it will, consequently, never be attainable by a life of pleasure and delight : the Lord exacted the last farthing, that is, the most severe temporal expiation from the primitive Christian, consequently he will not forgive the whole debt to the Christian of the present age.

This, my brethren, is the spirit of the gospel : this is a truth, which will continue for ever.—Where, then, are your tears,—your austerities,—your fasts,—your self-denials,—your perseverance in prayer ? Where is that spirit of compunction and humiliation, which imprints on every action the seal of penance ? What sufferings do you impose on yourselves ? What do you do, in order to be entitled to the name of penitent,—the only title on which you can pretend to salvation ?

But what do I say ? so far from being penitents, I fear that many are not entitled to the name of Christians. Would you have no reason to dread the justice of God, supposing that you had only the common duties of the gospel to fulfil, without any sins to atone for ? Alas ! what a life of dissipation and thoughtlessness is led by the generality of those who profess to be disciples of the gospel ! Ah ! never were luxury, depravation of morals, indifference about the things of God, and solicitude for the things of the world, more universal, nor more unbounded : never were the paths of life so unfrequented, nor the number of the just so small. Select, if you please, from amongst your acquaintance, the men of the greatest piety, the men who are canonized by the world ; the women who are applauded by the multitude ; the elect of the age, says St. Augustin, whose exterior deportment

is irreproachable, and examine whether you can discover even the traces of primitive sanctity in their lives ;—whether you can discern one of those features, the full assemblage of which is required to form the likeness of the true Christian ;—whether you can distinguish in their persons disciples of Jesus,—children of faith,—citizens of heaven,—enemies of the world,—crucified men,—strangers on earth :—look around your acquaintance, and tell me whether amongst them all you can discover one who fulfils all the duties of a Christian. I speak to men of every rank and profession in life.

Thus, beloved friends, our obligations are the same as they were in the first ages ; and manners and customs alone are changed. Religion subsists to be our judge, but the faith, which is to save us, is extinct. The gospel has descended to us, to be the subject of our condemnation, after it

had been the rule of faith to our forefathers. The body of Christianity exists, but the spirit, which animated it, is banished from our hearts.—We are distinguished from the infidel, but our only distinction is this: that having sprung from a holy root, we are become wild branches, and have engrafted on the good olive the bud of infidelity, and the corrupted ways of the pagan and idolater.

Be not deceived, therefore, my beloved, by the idea that the present degenerate state of piety will excuse impenitence. Fix your eyes solely on the duties prescribed in the gospel, and be convinced, that unless your lives are strictly regulated according to them, you will be condemned, although your justice were to exceed, not only that of the Pharisee, but of all mankind put together.

You, among my present hearers, who have renounced your former ways,

and entered the paths of piety and salvation, compare the feeble efforts of your repentance with the zeal and austerities of the primitive penitents. So far from being flattered by the view of your defective virtues, which perhaps appear great and singular in this corrupted age, be rather humbled and confused at the sight of the immense way you have yet to go, before you come up to the fervour and piety of former times. Your virtues, I acknowledge, exceed those of the generality of mankind ; but the difference between you and the primitive Christian is as great as the difference between the worldling and you.

May the sinner, therefore, tremble ; and may the just man be animated : may the one be awakened from his lethargy ; and may the other be renewed as the eagle in his strength : may the one view his state with dismay ; and may the other not look with compla-

cency on himself: may the one be alarmed at the sight of his irregularities; and may the other rely not too securely on his virtues. By these means we may be all united together hereafter, and sing in concert the praises of the Deity in the choirs of the heavenly Jerusalem.

WHIT - SUNDAY.

ON THE SPIRIT OF GOD, AND THE
SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

*We have received not the spirit of this
world, but the spirit which is of God.*

1 Cor. ii. 12.

THE spirit of God
and the spirit of the world have ever
been, and ever will be essentially at
variance. Their empire may be said
to be divided into two great cities, —
Jerusalem and Babylon; the inhabi-
tants of which, having little or no-
thing in common between them, differ
in all their laws, manners, usages, and

customs. Thus, the power of these two opposing spirits is extended over all the inhabitants of the universe ; they divide all mankind between them ; and their respective subjects are all known and characterised by their distinctive marks in the sight of God.

You, who compose this assembly, belong to one of the two : you are citizens either of Jerusalem or Babylon : you are animated either by the spirit of God, or by the spirit of the world : you are either heirs of the promises, or children of wrath. It is impossible you should belong to both at one and the same time : and it is equally impossible that you should not belong to one or other of them. Either the world or God must have dominion over your hearts : no axiom on earth can be plainer than this, for the heart of man cannot be divided ; to the one or other of these two masters it must and will necessarily belong.

We are invited by the Church on this day to look into the state of our souls, and to examine whether we live by the spirit of God, or by the spirit of the world. Many people deceive themselves on this point: the external observance of religious duties,—the use which is commonly made of the sacraments at stated times,—and the habit of living within certain bounds, which are thought sufficient to preserve them from the commission of any mortal offence; these, and such like practices, inspire the tepid with such confidence, that they are ready to conclude that all is right, and that their portion in heaven is perfectly secure, although at the same time their hearts are worldly and dissipated, and spiritually dead in the sight of God.

In order that you may be enabled to judge yourselves by the rule of the gospel, I will trace the distinctive characters which the scriptures affix to

these two opposing spirits : and I hope that, after a candid examination, it will appear that you are not only warranted in thinking yourselves secure, but that you will be able to say, with the confidence of the apostle, and in the words of my text, that you have indeed received, *not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God.*

1. The first sure mark, or characteristic token, of the Spirit of God abiding in the soul, is a love of recollection, prayer, and retirement. The apostles were no sooner filled with the Holy Ghost, than they renounced all other occupations in order to devote themselves entirely to the ministry of the gospel and to prayer. Previous to this, they had not been able to watch one hour with Jesus ; they knew not how to pray ; they had never asked of the Father any thing in the name of their divine Master : but after the Spirit had descended, and taken possession

of their hearts, they persevered with one mind in prayer; they frequented the temple at stated times of the day, and there they poured forth their souls in fervent supplications to the Lord. When persecuted by the Jews, prayer was their sweetest consolation. When condemned to the horrors of a prison, they made the dismal abode resound with their canticles of thanksgiving and praise. When the chains of Peter spread consternation over the flock, they had recourse to prayer: and to their fervent and continued supplications was the Church indebted for the miraculous deliverance of her chief Pastor. In a word, from being carnal, dissipated, worldly men, averse to recollection and restraint, they in a moment became men of prayer; they were endowed with interior spiritual wisdom; they fixed their conversation in heaven; and they were as intent on serving the Lord, and they extolled his

Q 2

wonders and benefits with as great freedom in the midst of Jerusalem, as formerly, when they contemplated his glories on the mountain of Galilee.

This is the first change which is wrought by the descent of the Spirit of God. No sooner does he take possession of the seat in our hearts which had been occupied by the world, than he works a complete revolution in our desires and inclinations : he throws a gloom over the objects, which before appeared so charming and attractive : he creates a disgust for those pleasures, which had hitherto been our delight : he introduces into our souls the God of peace and consolation, to whom we had hitherto refused admittance ; and by his enlivening presence, he changes our interior into the sweetest paradise of delights. Yes, my beloved, the newly reformed Christian, instead of depending on the society of men, or on exterior objects for amusement, is abun-

dantly supplied with every pleasure from his own breast: he there finds his God, and in his company alone he is happy. In the midst of dissipation, and in the hurry of business, he incessantly recalls his wandering thoughts to his interior: in the midst of domestic solitudes, and the cares of a busy world, he forms as it were a private solitude in his heart, and there he entertains himself with his Lord; there he piously laments the sad necessity which obliges him to mix in temporal things, and interrupt his meditations; there he endeavours, by acts of love and gratitude, to make some atonement for the many crimes which are committed in his presence: there, in a word, he lives and resides more constantly, than in the dissipations in which he is exteriorly engaged, but from which his heart is estranged.

Thus, in the words of St. Paul, the Christian is a spiritual and interior man.

Q 3

His whole life is directed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, which resides within him. His most ordinary actions are sanctified by religion. Whether he eats or drinks, mourns or rejoices ; whether he is in opulence or indigence, in health or sickness, pious reflections occur to his mind, and compel him to pour forth his soul before God in acts of submission and love. The transactions and vicissitudes of the world, the revolutions of states and empires, the fall and elevation of families, the prosperity or misery of the times, the licentiousness or the reform of public morals, the defection of the just, or the conversion of sinners, the overthrow of the reign of truth in kingdoms ; in short, all the changes and varieties which are witnessed in the world, and which rekindle in worldly souls the love of vanity, and inflame their ardour for the enjoyments of flesh and blood, are all so ma-

ny instructive lessons to the man who is filled and animated by the Spirit of God. They all remind him of the truths of religion : they display in a new light the vanity of all created things, and the importance of eternity. The whole world is like an open book, in which he continually reads the wonders of God, and discovers proofs of the extreme blindness of almost all mankind.

Sometimes, perhaps, he may be taken by surprise, and, seduced by the allurements of external objects, be hurried down the torrent for a few moments : sometimes, perhaps, through temporary inattention, his piety may yield to the influence of public maxims and examples : sometimes, perhaps, the dissipations of the world may gain an ascendancy over him, and turn away his thoughts from the God who is present within him : for human weakness is inseparable from the nature of man.

Q 4

during his mortal existence. But these are involuntary failings,—momentary deviations. He is immediately reprov-
ed for his sin by the Holy Spirit : he collects his wandering thoughts without delay ; he enters into himself ; he falls prostrate before the altar of God ; he endeavours to satisfy his injured justice by sincere compunction ; and he humbly acknowledges in his sight, that the more the pleasures of the world are indulged, the more is to be seen of the emptiness and vanity which belong to them ; and that no true enjoyment can be found in any created thing at a distance from God.

This, my beloved, is the life of recollection and prayer, which testifies that the soul is animated by the Spirit of God. This is the interior and spiritual life which distinguishes the lovers of Jesus from the lovers of the world. This is the essential characteristic of christian piety.

The above description is not imaginary ; it is taken from the word of God. According to this unerring authority, the just man lives by faith ;—his conversation is in heaven ;—his only delight is in the things above ;—he uses the world as if he used it not ; he considers it as nothing better than a shadow, which passeth away ;—he turns away his eyes from visible things, and fixes them as intently on those that are invisible, as if they were actually displayed before him ;—he forms his judgment of the value of those objects, which attract the esteem of men, not from external appearances, but from the concealed testimonies of truth ;—he is a stranger and traveller on earth ;—he is a citizen of the world to come ;—he advances towards his true country steadily, and without ceasing ;—he refers all his actions and all his desires to that happy termination of his exile ;—and he despises all that passes.

Q 5

with time, and that will not continue with him for ever, as things unworthy of his affections.

In these terms do the scriptures speak of the just man who is animated and directed by the Spirit of God. In fact, my beloved, what other description could have been given? If the Spirit of God exercise supreme dominion over the soul, he must necessarily regulate her desires, withdraw her affections from unlawful objects, and free her from the servitude of her passions: the soul must necessarily be dependant on him; she must see, as it were, with his eyes, act according to his impressions, seek only after spiritual things, and show forth in her own conduct the life of Jesus. In the same manner as the body is subject to the soul which animates it, must the soul be subject to the Holy Spirit, and be directed in every thing by his inspirations.

2. Now, my beloved, let me exhort

you to judge yourselves according to these rules. Do you discover in your souls this first indubitable token of the Spirit of God? Is it by him, or by the spirit of the world that you are influenced and directed in your desires and inclinations, in your projects and hopes, in your joys and griefs, in your thoughts and actions? I do not ask whether or not the world has too much power over you at times: at times, I know it has; for, alas! where is the man who, in the midst of the perils which surround him on every side, is not sometimes liable to be drawn aside by some or other of its fascinating allurements? But I ask, whether it is the Spirit of God, or the spirit of the world, which may most properly be said to be the grand moving and governing principle, that is known to preside over the general system of your conduct?

This is my question: and I ask it.

Q 6

not that I wish for any information on my own account ; my only motive for asking it is, to put you in mind of the urgent necessity, which all are under in this weighty particular, of looking narrowly to themselves. For my own part, comparing the ways of men with the severe rules of the gospel, I have no hesitation in declaring, that it is by no means improbable but that the greater number of us, who are here assembled, not excepting those who are exteriorly regular in their duties, are chiefly under the influence of the spirit of the world, that we are consequently strangers to the Spirit of God, and that we do not live in a manner that will ensure to us the possession of the eternal promises. I will state my reasons, and submit them to your examination.

In the first place, we never enter seriously into ourselves. Our time, perhaps, is properly spent in the ordinary duties of our state of life : we,

perhaps, are attentive to our domestic affairs, and sedulously provide for the present and future welfare of those who are entrusted to us : we, perhaps, are scrupulous in our dealings, and offend in nothing against our neighbours : all this, perhaps, we do, and we are certainly entitled to some degree of merit on that account. But none of these duties recall our wandering thoughts, and fix them upon God : none of them induce us to look into the state of our interior. Our minds are still as dissipated as ever, and we are as much strangers to ourselves, as if we did not perform any of them. Even the works of piety are insufficient to fix our attention : our hearts are occupied with the world, at the time that our knees are bent before the veil of the sanctuary ; our thoughts are wandering on a thousand impertinent objects, at the time that our lips are employed in reciting canticles of adoration and praise :

our imaginations are running after airy phantoms and delusive dreams, at the time that we attempt to meditate on the truths of salvation : in a word, at the time that our deportment is regular and irreproachable in the eyes of men, we fly away, as it were, from ourselves, and, instead of devoting our leisure time to recollection, and the enjoyment of God in the interior of our souls, we dread to be left in solitude even for one hour ; and we hasten away to society, as the only source of enjoyment, after the fatigues and sollicitudes of the day are concluded. This, my beloved, too plainly indicates that the Spirit of God does not reside within us. For the soul that is enlivened by his divine presence, is delighted with solitude ; she courts retirement, in order to enjoy the society of the God of consolation ; her only pleasure is to converse with Jesus in her interior ; she sedulously avoids every occupation or amusement

that distracts her thoughts, and diverts her attention from him. These are her pleasures, and these would be our pleasures likewise, were we possessed by the Spirit of God.—As long, therefore, as our thoughts are hurried away by restless desires, ambitious projects, and anxious solitudes ; as long as we are obliged to fly to company for amusement, in order to dispel the gloom which solitude has created, so long must we conclude that our souls are deprived of the enlivening presence of God, and that the spirit by which we are animated is no other than the spirit of the world.

In the second place, I say that we are influenced by the spirit of the world, not only because we are averse to recollection and retirement, but likewise because our desires, our affections, our opinions, and our actions, are all under the guidance of that same spirit. With respect to every object

that surrounds us, in relation to every event, that either excites our astonishment, or affects our feelings, we think like the world, we judge like the world, and we act like the world. We are dejected by afflictions, and elated by prosperity; we are mortified and humbled by reproaches and contempt; and we are flattered and delighted by honours and respect. Those that succeed in the world we call happy; and those that fail, wretched and miserable. We envy the good fortune of our superiors; we are jealous of the rising merit of our equals; and we look down with supercilious contempt on that state of life which is inferior to our own. We admire the talents which the world admires; we are dazzled by the splendor of high birth, opulence, and titles; and we pride ourselves on every superiority which Providence has given us above others. In a word, our desires, our hopes, our expectations, our

fears, are all excited by the world.— We may, perhaps, in conversation, speak of the world with contempt; but in our conduct we are influenced solely by the world. We may, perhaps, on occasions, be guided by christian motives, consult the honour and glory of God in our determinations, be submissive on trying occasions to the will of heaven, and be animated by sentiments of true piety: but we act in this christian manner only now and then; it is not a regular undertaking, a systematical mode of conduct; it is nothing more than a faint gleam of religion, which continues only for a moment,—an interruption only of the general tenor of our lives. The primary and universal principle, both of our thoughts and actions, is the spirit of the world, and nothing better. Now, where the spirit of the world reigns, there the Spirit of God is not. We may, perhaps, hear his voice inviting

us to return to him ; we may, perhaps, be favoured with holy inspirations and pious desires ; but this does not constitute him king over our hearts. He knocks at the door, but he has not entered the house : he permits some few rays of his love to fall upon the soul, but it cannot be said that he has as yet favoured her with his presence, or that, as long as this continues to be her condition, he will ever descend there in person.

If this be the description of our state, then what are we to say ? One thing only, and this is, that we belong to the world ; that we are animated by the spirit of the world ; and that, although we have the appearance of life, we do, indeed, remain in death. This is a subject which never enters into our examination. We form a judgment of ourselves from our exterior deportment, which is irreprehensible, and from the regular performance of works

which are esteemed by men, and applauded as if they constituted the very essence of piety : but we never ask ourselves this question : " By which spirit am I animated and directed in the ordinary occurrences of life ? by the Spirit of God ? or by the spirit of the world ? What are my desires and my fears, my hopes and my solitudes, my joys and my sorrows, my attachments and my dislikes, my principal aim and object through life ? are they not all similar to those of the world ? If so, the Spirit of God has no part in me : I am wholly under the influence of the spirit of the world ; and if I do not reform, I shall perish together with it ; for the world is already judged." No opinion that you can form can be truer, or better founded than this.

But there are still grounds to hope for better things. Enter seriously on the important task of self-examination. Invoke the assistance of the Holy

Ghost : be instant in your supplications to him ; and if you discover that you do not possess him, give yourselves no rest until you are assured that he is descended into your souls, and by his enlivening presence has produced a perfect change in your affections and desires. By these means only will you expel the spirit of the world, and make yourselves acceptable to him, who on this day descended to take possession of all hearts, and to make them his own for ever.

WHITSUN-MONDAY.

ON THE SPIRIT OF GOD, AND THE
SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

*We have received not the spirit of this
world, but the spirit which is of
God. 1 Cor. ii. 12.*

THE importance of the subject, which formed the substance of my last discourse, induces me to submit it again to your consideration, in order that you may be fully enabled to examine the state of your souls at this holy time, and impartially decide whether you have received the Spirit of God, or whether

you are still enslaved to the spirit of the world. I have already stated that the soul, in which the holy Spirit resides, is replenished with such interior delights, that she desires no other happiness than to enjoy the society of God in her own interior by a spirit of recollection and prayer; and that she regulates all her thoughts, words, and actions in strict conformity with his holy law. I will now resume the thread of my discourse, and describe the other characteristic marks of the Spirit of God abiding intimately within us.

1. In the first place, this pure and divine Spirit is no sooner descended into the soul, than he draws back the veil which had hitherto concealed from inspection the extent of her irregularities. He introduces her, as it were, into her own interior: he displays, in a clear light, the crimes of her past life: he discovers numberless passions

and frailties, which the dissipation of a worldly life had prevented her from beholding : he unfolds all the corruption and pride of her heart, and the opposition which she experiences within herself to the rules of the gospel : he uncovers all the wounds which have been caused by the world and self-love : and he convinces her that the will, the mind, the imagination, the senses, the flesh, are all disordered, and leagued together against justice, sanctity, and truth.

The discovery of this secret and universal derangement of all the faculties of the soul necessarily produces a two-fold effect on the mind of the repenting sinner. It inspires him with the resolution of reforming every abuse by a constant, vigilant attention over all his actions ; and of satisfying the justice of God for the past, by a course of mortification and penance, voluntarily entered upon, and resolutely sustained through

every trial or encounter that may possibly happen to him in future.

These are the effects which are produced by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The graces, which he infuses, cannot remain inactive : they stimulate the soul to exertion ; and cause her to adopt the means which will the most speedily break the chains of her captivity, and set her at perfect liberty. The spirit breathes wheresoever he will ; and the truths which he teaches are sure to captivate : for the heart which he enlightens is ever open to conviction, being reformed, as the apostle expresses it, in the newness of the spirit.—The worldling, I acknowledge, is sometimes enabled to behold the error of his ways, and the corruption of his heart : he sometimes is induced to enter into himself, and take a view of his interior. But his inducement is not the love of truth, but the desire of regaining the peace of mind which he

had lost. Self-love is his only reprover; and, therefore, although he conceives a hatred against the evils which his sins have entailed on him, he is not in love with the remedy—mortification and penance.

But the man who is enlightened by the Spirit of God, is actuated by other motives. It is sin that he detests: it is the honour of his Maker that he loves: and, therefore, he scrutinizes every action and inclination; he estimates the influence which self-love and the world exercise over him; and he is animated with redoubled zeal in his endeavours to correct every irregularity, and to apply the remedy to every disorder.

Thus, if in his examination he discovers that his heart is corrupted with pride, and that to this cause must be attributed his dread of humiliation and disgrace, he endeavours, by repeated acts of humility, to conquer this un-

happy passion:—if he is addicted to antipathies and hatred, he offers violence to himself, and on every occasion gives testimony of his kindness and good-will to the object of his dislike:—if he experiences within himself an inordinate love of dissipation and pleasure, he seeks to counteract it by recollection and retirement:—if he is inclined to indulge in the frivolous ornaments of dress and vanity, he resists his inclinations, and confines himself within the bounds of modest simplicity and decorum:—if he feels an aversion to the duties of religion, he forces himself to practise supernumerary works of piety, in order to conquer his repugnance by exceeding the severities of the law.

These are the self-denials, these are the conflicts by which the truly reformed sinner endeavours to reduce the rebellious powers of his soul into subjection to the will of God. He is like

an inexorable judge; he listens neither to excuses nor palliations: he attacks every passion indiscriminately: if success does not immediately crown his labours, he is not discouraged, but throws himself at the feet of God, and humbly solicits an increase of grace: he entertains a sincere aversion for those passions which continue to resist his efforts; and it may be said that he suffers more from the evils which he is yet unable to overcome, than from all the acts of self-denial and mortification, by which he endeavours to atone for those which he has already conquered.

This is the pious ardour which the Spirit of God enkindles in the soul. Now, my beloved, judge yourselves according to this model: you cannot easily be deceived; a slight examination will show whether you are of the number of the just, or whether you are animated by the spirit of the world.

The spirit of the world is averse to

R 2

mortification and restraint : it favours every irregular desire ; and stands up in defence of vanity and pleasure. This is the spirit of the world. I will not say that it always stimulates the soul to indulge in criminal excesses. No : it is a subtle spirit : its principal object is to corrupt the heart ; and provided it can attain its ends, it is indifferent as to the means, whether it be by urging the soul to notorious crimes, or by infusing a multiplicity of worldly inclinations,—inclinations, which, separately perhaps, may not be criminal, but which, when united together, and subsisting habitually in the soul, form the character of a perfect worldling. This is a state of sin and death ; and although it be not sullied by great crimes, it separates the soul from God, and deprives her of his spirit as effectually as the most criminal life.

The man, therefore, who attends to

the external duties of religion, and at the same time is unmortified in his affections, and a stranger to self-denial; who is intent only on pleasure, and refuses himself no gratification that is not evidently offensive to God; who seeks ease and comfort on all occasions, and is solicitous only to avoid criminal voluptuousness; who admits every alleviation which sloth and tepidity have introduced, and complies with the letter of the law, and no more; that man, I say, is a worldling, and the Spirit of God is not with him.

Examine yourselves, my beloved, on these subjects. You, perhaps, are not guilty of any notorious transgressions: but that is not sufficient. Do you offer violence to self-love? Do you labour to subdue the depravity of corrupt nature? Have you acquired, by the means of piety, a command over your worldly and irregular inclinations? Do you perform voluntary

R 3

acts of self-denial and penance? I do not ask, whether you are visited with afflictions? because it is more than probable that you suffer from the world, from the difficulties attendant on your state of life, and from the frowardness of men: but what are the *voluntary* sufferings, that you impose on yourselves? May it not be said, that the present regularity of your lives arises from far different causes than from the love of God? and that it costs you neither labour nor violence to enter upon it? If so: if it is not in your power to adduce acts of self-denial and mortification, voluntary sufferings, and sacrifices of your worldly affections in proof of the descent of the Holy Spirit into your souls, you have too much reason to fear that you are as yet under the influence of the spirit of the world, and that God is far removed from you.

Your examination, however, must not stop here. The truly reformed

sinner not only endeavours to repress the ardour of passion by self-denials ; but he endeavours likewise, by expiatory works of penance, to satisfy the justice of God, which has been already injured by his sins. The Spirit which I will give you, says our Saviour, *shall convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment*, (John xvi. 8.) : it shall convince the world of the extent of the debt which has been contracted by sin, of the means by which alone it can be discharged ; of the sufferings I myself have endured in order to effect your reconciliation ; and of the austerities that you yourselves must practise in order to avoid the severe judgments which await you hereafter.

On this head, therefore, examine yourselves.—Do you feel that ardour for penitential austerities which never abates, because it is convinced that it can never endure sufficient to satisfy the injured justice of God? Do you

R. 4

submit to the painful duties of your state, and to the crosses and afflictions of life in the spirit of penance? If weakness of constitution will not allow you to practise the more severe works of penance, are you grieved at your inability to make that flesh the instrument of your repentance, which has been the occasion of your crimes? Do you chastise it as far at least as your weakness will permit? Do you place yourselves in the rank of criminals, who have forfeited their right to the enjoyments of this world; of criminals, who cannot otherwise obtain the reversal of the sentence of eternal death which they have incurred, than by condemning themselves to a temporal death, namely, by dying daily to the world, to the flesh, to their own will, and to all creatures, by voluntary works of penance and self-denial.

Ah ! is it not too true that all your

solicitude is directed to the pampering a body, on which, probably, the Lord of heaven looks down with an eye of indignation and disgust? You exert your ingenuity only in attempting to justify this spirit of sloth and self-enjoyment. You consider the obligation of penance as an obligation, which may be neglected without any infringement of duty. So far from taking part with the justice of God, you take part only with yourselves : you say that the law requires too much from the infirmity of human nature : you seek every mitigation : you dread the least restraint, the least sensation of pain and languor : in a word, you love your body, and seek its comfort and ease far more than you do the justice of God, which requires that it should be chastised and crucified.—If this be the state of your mind, depend upon it, that the spirit by which you are animated, is not the spirit of zeal and fervour which invaria-

bly attends the Spirit of God; but that it is the spirit of flesh and blood, which will never possess the kingdom of heaven, because it is promised only to the lovers of self-denial and of the cross.

2. The last characteristic mark of the Spirit of God is constancy and resolution. — The apostles, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, were weak and timid: they trembled at the voice of a woman-servant: they fled at the death of Jesus: they concealed themselves in Jerusalem for fear of the Jews: not one of them all had courage to stand forward, and speak in defence of the innocence and doctrine of their divine Master. But no sooner was the Spirit of God descended on them, than their former timidity was replaced by the most heroic fortitude: they appear in the midst of Jerusalem with a holy confidence. They proclaim the divinity of Jesus even before the priests and doctors of the law. They despise

threats. They endure sufferings with joy for the name of Jesus. They reply boldly, that it is more just to obey God than man. And, as if Judea could not offer dangers and persecutions proportionate to their courage, they scatter themselves over the whole world : where the ferocity of the most barbarous nations, the cruelty of the most savage tyrants, the prospect of the most ignominious death, produced no other effect in their minds than an increase of courage and fortitude.

The same effect, although in a less sensible manner, is produced in the soul of every Christian by the presence of the Spirit of God. He is raised, as it were, above himself :—he is admitted to a participation of the dignity and power of that Holy Spirit :—he is sealed with the divine characters of liberty and independence :—he is placed, as it were, in the bosom of the Divinity ; from whence, casting his

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eyes over the universe, he views, without intimidation, the oppressions and persecutions that are prepared for him ; and he treats with contempt the united efforts of the world and the devil, by which they endeavour to oppose the reign of God in his soul.

Truly, my beloved, there is no character on earth so dignified, so noble, so magnanimous as the man who is directed by the Spirit of God. The greatness and magnanimity which is derived from the world, is mean and contemptible in the comparison. The worldling, with all his grandeur, enjoys no true liberty : he is dependent on the world ; and in proportion to his dependence, so much does he dread its censures and frowns. But the just man fears not the world ; its raileries and derisions affect him no more than the tinkling of a cymbal. He glories in the service of God, even in the pre-

sence of those who glory in their shame : he pays deference to no one to the prejudice of religion : he condescends to no timid complaisance injurious to piety ; he refuses even to conform to the common maxims of the world on these occasions, because he is convinced that, so far from promoting the welfare of sinners by such condescensions, he would contribute only to confirm them in the error of their ways.—This was the spirit which animated the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Their zeal was attributed to the fumes of wine ; but their zeal was not repressed but inflamed by this calumnious insinuation : they were treated as fools by the multitude ; but they were more confirmed in their holy folly by these derisions : they were calumniated as seducers ; but they took no other means of proving to the world the justness of their cause, than those

by which they had incurred its censures; namely, they continued to condemn, to edify, and censure it.

Now the spirit of the world is a pliant, a politic spirit. Being solely under the influence of self-love, it seeks the truth only, inasmuch as it is agreeable: it espouses the cause of piety in the presence only of those who admire piety: it glories in the practice of virtue on those occasions only when it redounds to its honour. This is the spirit of the world. And is it not with this spirit, my beloved, that we are animated? Are we not timid and reserved, when we ought to appear openly in the cause of God and religion? do we not shrink when duty obliges us to expose ourselves to censures and derisions for his glory? and do we not dignify our cowardice by the name of *prudence*? In order not to be at variance with the world, do we not appear worldly, do we not speak

its language, applaud its maxims, follow its customs, and, on some occasions, even participate in its crimes ?

Ah ! if we judge ourselves impartially, we shall acknowledge that this is not an unfaithful description of our own character. I do not mean to insinuate that we are totally devoid of the love of truth : no ; I readily allow that we follow the world with a kind of regret ; that we avoid its more criminal excesses ; and that our conduct is distinguished by regularity, and by due attention to the external duties of religion. But we may be all this, and still be animated by the spirit which animates the declared worldling. This at least is certain, that we are not directed by the Spirit of God : for the Spirit of God is free and independent : it does not fear the world, because it despises it : it does not seek to please the world, because it is crucified to it : it does not solicit the approbation of the

world, because it condemns its maxims: it does not court the friendship of the world, because it is its declared enemy: it is not seduced by the allurements and example of the world, because it has conquered it. Timidity, therefore, is totally opposite to the Spirit of God: and no greater proof could we give that we are animated by the spirit of the world, than when we fear the world more than God, when we endeavour to please the world at the expense of religion, and when we sacrifice duty rather than be wanting in respect and attention to creatures.

Great God! infuse into our hearts, we beseech thee, that triple spirit of recollection, self-denial, and constancy, which Thou didst infuse into the hearts of thy disciples on the day of Pentecost;—that holy Spirit, by whose powerful influence thou didst change them into new men, and madest them the conquerors of the world, and

undaunted witnesses of thy truth. Expel for ever from our breasts the spirit of the world,—the spirit of dissipation and timidity,—the spirit of immortification and sloth,—the spirit of vanity and human respect, which has hitherto occupied the throne in our souls which was made for thee alone: renew on this day our desires, our affections, and our thoughts.—Come, O Holy Spirit, into our hearts: take the place of this miserable world which we abhor, but which we have not as yet had the courage to renounce: and, after Thou hast established here below thy abode in us, may we hereafter become the eternal temples of thy glory and truth.

TRINITY-SUNDAY.

ON THE NECESSARY DISPOSITIONS
FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF A
NEW LIFE.

*Teaching them to observe all things,
whatsoever I have commanded you.*

Matt. xxiii. 20.

THESE, beloved Christians, are the last injunctions of our Redeemer to his disciples. After having educated them in his divine school, taught them all the maxims of his heavenly doctrine; after having made them strong and perfect, and prepared them for the reception of the enliven-

ing spirit of grace and love, he invests them with full authority to preach the gospel, and defines the nature and the extent of their arduous mission : *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you : and behold I am with you all days, even until the consummation of the world.*

This commission is fraught with much useful instruction on two very important points. From it we learn the extent of the power with which the pastors of the Church, in quality of successors to the apostles, are invested ; and the extent of the duties which *you*, as Christians, are bound to fulfil. From it we learn that *we*, who are the pastors rightfully ordained, and lawfully sent by the Church, receive our mission and our power from heaven ; and that *you* are obliged to observe

all things whatsoever we are commanded to preach in the name of Jesus.

The first ought to be a subject of consolation, and induce you to return thanks to God, who has not only traced out the path to life eternal, but has constituted guides,—guides enlightened and directed by him, in order that this path might be pointed out to you in the clearest manner, and that there might be a living authority, worthy of your firmest confidence.—The second is sufficient to terrify you ; for the command is absolute, and exacts from you the observance of all things whatsoever have been commanded.——The first requires no comment: I will, therefore, confine my observations to the second, and will lay before you the extent of the obligations which we are commanded to require of you.

1. According to the rules of justice,

the sacrifice of our lives might be demanded of us ; because, the moment we sinned, we forfeited our right to existence, and became the victims of death. But the clemency of God has mitigated the sentence ; and instead of the sacrifice of our lives, the sacrifice of sensual pleasures is all that He is pleased to call for. This, therefore, is a duty which the sovereign will of God has imposed upon all Christians. This duty we engaged to fulfil at our baptism. These are the victims which we are commanded to immolate, in order to obtain our discharge from the malediction pronounced on all flesh, and to be admitted into the society of the people of God. This is the martyrdom of faith, to which we have devoted ourselves. This is the grand testimony, which we are bound to give to the truths of God.

A life of self-denial and penance, therefore, is indispensably required of

all who confess the name of Christ. No mitigation of this duty can be pleaded for : the precept is absolute, and without exception, and no power on earth can dispense from it. This being the truth, what opinion must we form of the conversion of those sinners who reform only the irregularities of their exterior deportment ; who shun the ways of debauchery and excess, because they are wearied in the pursuit of iniquity ; who retire from the giddy and clamorous scenes of dissipation, because they wish to enjoy the tranquillity of retirement ; who begin again to frequent the sacraments, but neither do penance for their former crimes, nor renounce their criminal attachments ; who confess their sins, but continue to indulge their love of sensual gratification in private, and retain all their ambitious projects, their hatreds, their jealousies, their envies, their worldly affections and desires ? What opinion,

I say, must we form of Christians who are satisfied with such a reformation as this? Will they be acceptable to the Lord? Ah! like the first-born of the Israelites, they offer themselves to him: that is, they present themselves to the priest, and appear at the foot of the altar. But they do not devote themselves to the service of the temple: they do not become the inheritance of the Lord: they substitute other offerings in their place; they substitute exterior works,—works, that are wholly destitute of that which is the soul and principle of true piety,—the spirit of love. They imagine that God will be satisfied with the exchange: but no: the sacrifice of the heart is demanded; and if a single part be reserved, the whole will be rejected.

This, nevertheless, is in general the whole change that is witnessed in the

reformed worldling. He begins to lead a more tranquil and retired life ; not because he loves God above all things, but because he is satiated with other enjoyments : he refuses himself every criminal excess, not because he hates the crime of intemperance, but because he is more in love with himself, and is more attentive to the care of his health, and the preservation of his property : he dedicates himself to the Lord, but he retains all his former affections : he makes no sacrifice of his will : he does not slay the victim as the law enjoins : the sword of self-denial effects no painful separation.

Seeing, however, that he perseveres in the participation of the holy mysteries, that he is exempt from the customary excesses of the world, and that he walks, to all appearance, in the same path as the just man, he is prompted to conclude that he has finished the great

work, and that he is justified in the sight of God. Thus, without offering up the painful sacrifice of his sensual appetites, of his desires and hopes, of his antipathies and hatreds, of his pride and ambition, he is deluded by the idea that he has entered on a life of virtue, that he has renounced the world, and that he has made the oblation which the Lord required at his hands.

But, my beloved, true piety is the sacrifice of the heart ; and this sacrifice must be real and universal. Every inordinate attachment, every criminal affection, every vicious habit, must be permanently renounced ; and the soul must evaporate, as it were, like a holocaust on the altar of divine love.

2. This, I acknowledge, is a work of difficulty : but it is indispensable. Human prudence, indeed, pretends to

point out an easier method of reform : it says, that the sinner ought not to divorce himself all at once from the world ; that if he undertake too much in the beginning, he will probably fail in the end ; that it would be more advisable to conquer himself in small things at first, and then proceed to others ; that in the commencement of a new life, many allowances will be made for human infirmities ; and that he should try his strength on his weaker enemies before he attacked the stronger, in the same manner as David conquered lions and bears before he dared to encounter Goliath.

But, my beloved, such prudence as this will not avail you. It is in vain that you attempt to conquer your passions one by one. A reformation of life requires a different kind of circumspection and caution from all other undertakings. If it is not entire at once, it will not suc-

ceed : all is yet to be done, as long as one vicious habit remains unsubdued : if you attack them separately, you attempt only to cut off one of the heads of the hydra at a time, which will immediately shoot forth, and regain its former vigour. Grace will not admit of a divided victory.

Piety, I allow, has its degrees, and may be perfected daily more and more: forty years is required for completing the walls and temple of the spiritual Jerusalem. But the world, and every criminal attachment, must be immediately expelled from the heart ; every thing incompatible with christian piety must immediately be renounced ; and as soon as the voice of the Lord is heard in the soul, the walls of the sinful Jericho must fall down before him, and become a heap of ruins.

3. The man, who sincerely desires to renounce the ways of sin, is not dis-

mayed by the prospect of difficulties. He encounters without fear the world, the flesh, and the devil, at the same time: he is even hurried into pious excesses by the superabundance of his fervour. He does not dispute with the Lord concerning the exact sum which he is to pay, but courageously devotes himself to a life of unremitted penance and mortification, and is guided in the performance of his works of atonement, not by the prescribed limits of duty, but by the transports of an animated zeal.

This is the conduct of the truly reformed penitent. But, alas, my beloved, where is it to be witnessed? In general, the trifling, — the nominal penance imposed by the minister of confession, is the only act of atonement which the sinner offers up to the injured justice of God. His first solicitude is to discover the path which

is the most easy and the most agreeable to self-love. So far from attempting any thing beyond the limits of duty, he studies how far he may conform to the maxims of the world, without an absolute violation of the law. In the plan, which he forms for his future conduct, he allots as much to the world as he does to God. Instead of selecting for his imitation the most eminent models of piety, he declares that he will avoid the extremes into which he pretends that they were imprudently hurried : he says that he will not affect singularity, and that he will not attend to those trifling observances, which, in his opinion, savour more of superstition than sanctity. Thus, so far from admiring in their character the traits which are worthy of his notice, he is solicitous only to discover imaginary defects ; and thus he prefaces the dedication of himself to God, by stigmatizing the

conduct of those good men who served him with sincerity and truth. He determines to give that only to God, which he cannot refuse ; and he treats with him, not as with an irritated Father, whom he is solicitous to appease, but as with an enemy, to whom no unnecessary concession is to be granted.

But, my beloved, the man who intends to prescribe bounds to his love of God, is a stranger to the nature of divine love : the man, who seeks to alleviate the sorrows of repentance by every lawful indulgence, has very faint ideas of the enormity of sin. Yes : the sincerity of that Christian's conversion, who fixes limits to his zeal, is doubtful at the best ; and it would not be rash to conclude that a very trifling change is wrought in the heart, when the person takes time to reflect on, and to claim merit from the first works of repentance. A true and permanent reform

of life is never commenced with such coldness and indifference. Then it is that the penitent is overpowered, as it were, with the infusions of grace : then it is that he is unable to restrain the impetuosity of his grief ; that his tears never seem to flow in sufficient abundance ; and that his compunction never attains its desired height. The view of the deplorable state in which he has hitherto lived, spreads terror over his soul, and arms him with indignation against himself. When the minister of God attempts to moderate his fears, and to repress the violence of his grief, he describes in the strongest terms the severity of God's justice, and pathetically acknowledges that he cannot console himself with the assurance, that the clemency of the Great Judge will be extended to him in such a liberal manner as his director represents. Animated with this holy spirit, he is resolved to redeem the

time which has been criminally squandered away in the pursuit of folly ; to dedicate the remainder of his life to the most perfect love ; and never more to forget the inestimable blessing of the knowledge of the truth which has been imparted to him. With a holy jealousy he reflects on the happiness of those who dedicated themselves to the service of God in the days of their youth ; and he laments that his own folly and blindness have so long prevented him from loving that amiable Benefactor and Parent, who alone is worthy of his love. Zeal impels him to chastise his flesh on account of its defilements, and to make subservient to justice the members, which have so long been subservient to iniquity.

These are the marks of a true repentance : this is a fervour which will never fall away. The sacrifice is perfect and entire : the fervour and superabundance of love consume it, and

cause it to ascend in the odour of sweetness even to the throne of the Most High.

4. In the last place, the sincerely reformed Christian is animated with the spirit of docility. He knows that the designs of Providence are concealed from his view ; and therefore, instead of following the dictates of human prudence, he submits implicitly to the laws and maxims of the gospel. He knows, that under the guidance of his Maker he will never err ; but that his fall will be inevitable, if he attempt to accommodate his piety to times and circumstances.

Are you, my beloved, animated with this docile spirit? Ah! instead of following the laws of the gospel with simplicity, you violate them, and seek to excuse the violation by alledging pious pretexts. You omit many important exercises of devotion and penance, under pretence that they are sine-

gularities, calculated only to excite the ridicule of worldlings, and throw an odium on religion. You abstain from the sacraments, under pretence that familiarity with holy things will diminish your respect for them. You resent injuries, on the supposition that duty requires you to vindicate your character from every attack. You refuse to endure calumny in silence, under pretence that the honour of God is interested, and that the impostor ought to be detected, in order to guard the public against his attempts for the future. Thus is religion frequently made a cloak for the concealment of the worst of passions.

But, my beloved, the laws of God are positive and evident. It is our duty to leave in his hands the power of avenging his glory, and submit with simplicity and obedience to every duty. He himself commands us to obey : and since no reasons have induced him

to change his holy laws, no reasons are sufficient to warrant a temporary suspension of our obedience.

Sometimes you refuse to have recourse to the more minute exercises of piety, under pretence that such exercises are calculated only for the simple and untutored Christian; and you neglect the more trivial observances of exterior worship, under pretence that you possess a more enlightened piety, and that you are not edified by such observances. But, my beloved, by these exterior aids, by these apparently trivial exercises is fervour maintained, and the Christian preserved from neglecting the more essential duties of religion.

Every thing is useful to true piety. Faith is awakened, love is inflamed, and hope is cherished by the minutest observances. Nothing is imperfect, but works that are destitute of fervour. The most simple exercises of piety, when

accompanied with fervent love, are as dignified in the sight of God as the contemplations of the seraphim. The perfection of devotion consists, not in the pretended sublimity of the duties we perform, but in a certain liveliness of faith, which may attend the performance of the most ordinary works of piety, as well as of the most exalted.—Many people imagine that they are advanced in the paths of perfection, because they devote themselves to more elevated functions, to more sublime meditations, and to more perfect methods of prayer: but if, at the time that they perform these enlightened exercises, they are subject to the defects of the weak and imperfect Christian, their perfection is imaginary: we will allow that they contemplate the glories of the Lord, like the apostles on mount Thabor, but they are not divested of the inclinations of flesh and blood: they are more solicit-

ous to build for themselves a tabernacle, and a permanent dwelling-place on earth, than to fulfil the will of God without reserve, and to deny themselves.

Be on your guard, my beloved : suffer not yourselves to be deceived by any of these false appearances. The defective offerings, the imperfect conversions, which I have described, frequently lead to a more dangerous state than the open state of sin. Correspond, therefore, faithfully with the designs of God : walk on resolutely in the path which the gospel points out to you ; and let not your passions, concealed under the cloak of piety, obstruct the views which Providence hath formed for your eternal welfare. Live under the immediate guidance of the Most High ; and with the perfect sacrifice of your hearts, unite that fidelity which will continually cause your fervour to be renewed ; which will

impel you to observe all whatsoever the Lord hath commanded ; which will preserve unto the end the treasure of justice, and obtain for you the consummation of it in the regions of never-ending bliss.

CORPUS-CHRISTI.

ON AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 1 Cor. xi. 27.

· **BEING** invited by the Church on this day to return thanks to God for the inestimable blessing which he has bequeathed to us in the holy sacrament of the altar, I would gladly enter on the agreeable subject, and exhort you to pour forth your souls before the Almighty in the sweetest canticles of love and praise ; but

as this has been already treated of in a former discourse, I must call your attention, on this day of spiritual joy, to a subject of a gloomy nature, and describe the dismal effects of an unworthy communion.

The love, which Jesus has manifested for us in the institution of this mystery,—a love, which would not suffer him to leave us orphans during the few years of our mortal existence on earth, is rejected with contempt by unbelievers, and repaid with ingratitude by many who enjoy the light of truth. The advocates of the late defection from the centre of unity, the Catholic Church, direct their chief attacks against this mystery of love, and by their unworthy scoffs and derisions endeavour to bring into contempt a sacrament which excites the astonishment of angels, and has been one of the greatest objects of veneration and worship to the whole christian



world from the time of its institution.

The dishonour which is offered to God by the obstinacy of our brethren in error, is undoubtedly great ; but it is not equal to the dishonour which is offered by the ingratitude of the believer who communicates unworthily. The former, like the Jews, turn away from our Lord, saying : *How can this man give us his flesh to eat : this saying is hard, and who can hear it*, (John vi.) : but the latter, the men of his peace, who walk with him with consent in the house of the Lord, who take sweet meats together with him ; these, like the impious Judas the traitor, *eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the body of the Lord*.

In order that your faith may be roused on this solemn festival, and that you may be excited to avoid with circumspection and fear this greatest

of all crimes, I will describe the enormity of an unworthy communion, and display before your eyes the terrible judgments which hang over the head of the sacrilegious receiver.

The apostle declares, in the words of my text, that he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, *shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*: that is, shall be guilty of the crime of deicide, by crucifying again, as far as his power will permit, the Lord of Glory. This, my beloved, is not an exaggerated description of the enormity of this crime; it is the truth, and nothing but the truth: for if the sacrifice of the cross be renewed daily on our altars on the part of Jesus, his crucifixion, likewise, is renewed on the part of the sinner, as often as he communicates unworthily: and this, with circumstances infinitely more aggravating than when he was crucified in a bloody manner on mount Calvary. For

your instruction in this particular, I will draw a comparative statement of the guilt of both Jews and Christians.

1. In the first place, if the Jews had known the Lord of glory, says the apostle (1 *Cor.* ii. 8.), they would not have crucified him. They imagined that the Jesus, whom they persecuted, was merely the son of Joseph and Mary: they thought that he was a seducer of the people, and a declared opposer of the law of Moses. Their ignorance, I allow, was not excusable: because the works, the doctrine, the sanctity of Jesus, the accomplishment of the prophecies in his ministry, ought to have opened their eyes, and convinced them that He was, in fact, the Messiah, whom they had so long expected. But, whether their ignorance be excusable or not, is a question of little importance in this discussion: I have only to state that they did not acknowledge him, that they did not

distinguish him from the many false Messiahs, who, a short time before that period, had disturbed the peace of Palestine, and excited seditions in Jerusalem: and that, when they condemned him to a disgraceful death, they thought that they were doing a work acceptable to the Lord, and that they were vindicating the honour of his worship and his laws: in a word, *they knew not what they did.* Luke xxiii. 34.

But it is not so with the unworthy communicant. There is no plea of ignorance to extenuate his crime. He believes that Jesus is the Messiah: he beholds him, with the eyes of faith, really present on our altars; he acknowledges him to be the Lord of glory,—the son of the Most High,—the splendor of the Father,—the immortal King of ages,—the Saviour of the world,—the Head and the Spouse of the Church. He acknowledges all these august qualities in his person,

and, with full consciousness of his crimes, he dares to insult him, and to condemn him to a more disgraceful death in his own breast than the death which he endured on the cross: he avowedly lifts up his hand against the Almighty.

Secondly, the executioners who crucified our Lord on mount Calvary, may be called the ministers of the justice of God. By their crime they accomplished the designs of the Father, and executed the sentence of death which he pronounced upon his Son immediately after the fall of our first parents. They were the instruments by which our Lord effected his resolution of offering himself in sacrifice to the Father,—a resolution which he formed in the first instant of his conception. They seemed, in some degree, to take part with God, and to second the efforts of his love for the redemption of mankind: they lifted up their hands

against the Holy One, at a time when every hand was to be lifted up against him.—But the unworthy communicant accomplishes no designs of the Almighty. On the contrary, he dishonours the Son at the time that the Father is glorifying him : he drags him from the bosom of his Father against his will. No one unites with him for the purpose of completing the sacrilegious tragedy : the Son does not deliver himself into his hands, as he did into the hands of the Jews : the sinner alone is the party concerned : he alone forms the design : he alone executes it : heaven and earth look down with horror on his crime : and the whole guilt of the blood of the innocent Lamb of God falls on him alone.

Thirdly, the crime of the Jews was beneficial to all mankind. They spilled the blood which was to wash away all our defilements : they immolated the Lamb ; and by this immolation our reconcilia-

tion with the Father was effected : they put to death the Just One, but by this means death itself was subdued : they opened his side, and the Church of all nations issued out of it : they pierced his hands, and innumerable blessings were immediately scattered over the universe : they erected the cross, and, in process of time, it triumphed over the whole world : in a word, theirs was one of those fortunate crimes, if it may be so called, by the means of which the great work of our salvation was completed, and the eternal designs of God upon his Church were finally accomplished.— But when this detestable outrage has been committed, and the sinner has sported himself with crucifying the Lord of glory upon our altars, and has incurred the guilt of his body and blood, by an unworthy communion, what benefit can be derived from his impious sacrilege ? What can we ex-

pect will be the consequence of such hardened guilt as this? what but the fear that it will contribute to draw down the most dreadful judgments on the Christian world. For if the Apostle, even in the age of primitive fervour and piety, attributed all the calamities which afflicted the church of Corinth, to unworthy communions; what judgments may we not expect will be drawn down on our heads by the profanations of so many unworthy ministers, and of so many tepid and dissolute Christians, who pollute our altars in this corrupted age? May we not attribute to this cause the unspeakable evils which have so long afflicted the catholic world? For, if heaven could not witness the crime of those who crucified him without manifesting its indignation by signs and wonders, although the salvation of man was to be the consequence: if all nature was troubled and in confusion; if the veil of the temple was rent; and

if the whole universe appeared as if struck by the hand of God; what other consequences must ensue from the same outrage a thousand times repeated, but the derangement of seasons, the confusion of nature, the overthrow of empires, and the revolution of the whole christian world.

Fourthly, the crime of the unhappy men, who crucified our Lord, will not appear in such odious colours, if we consider the motives by which they were actuated. In the first place, the priests and pharisees sought the death of a man who openly degraded them in the eyes of the people; who exposed their hypocrisy to view; who called them whitened sepulchres, fair without and rotten within; and it was their interest that their accuser himself should be condemned as a malefactor, in order that their reputation and authority might be restored among the people.—But the unworthy commu-

nicant has nothing to alledge in extenuation of his crime. He is spared by his Lord at the time that he betrays him; his faults are not attended to; and his secret defilements are, as it were, overlooked. Even when he gives the perfidious kiss, Jesus does not hurl the shafts of his vengeance on him, nor does he suddenly appear before him in all the terrors of his majesty, and throw him prostrate on the ground as he formerly did the Jewish rabble, with these words, *I am the Jesus whom thou seekest.* No: his Lord is all clemency and love: he restrains his arm: he is tender of the reputation of his deluded creature: he does not expose him to the scoffs and derisions of his brethren by thrusting him forcibly from the altar. Nevertheless, at the time that he receives these singular marks of benevolence from his God, he dares to insult him in the most outrageous and sanguinary manner. — In the

second place, it is not recorded that the blind whom he had restored to sight, or the lame whom he had healed, or the lepers whom he had cleansed, or the dead whom he had raised to life, were of the number of those who crucified him. They did not indeed speak openly in his defence, but at least they abhorred the crime of taking part with his executioners.

This places the ingratitude of the unworthy communicant in the strongest point of view. He was blind, and the Lord restored him to sight; he was struck with leprosy, and the Lord repeatedly cleansed him; he was dead, and the Lord raised him to life. These were blessings indeed: and one would have thought that the mind of man would have shuddered at the idea of revolting against the author of them. If the infidel, the pagan, the barbarian, who had never been favoured with his choicest gifts, had dishonoured his

mysteries, it would not excite our astonishment: but that the believer, from whom he had concealed nothing,—that the disciple of his gospel, to whom he had revealed all his mysteries, imparted all his gifts, and admitted to the hope of all his promises,—that the Christian who was made the flesh of his flesh, and the bone of his bone, by the ineffable union which he contracted with him in baptism,—that he should declare against his benefactor, and lift up his consecrated hand as if to hurl him from his throne of mercy! ah, this is ingratitude indeed! Our Lord himself could not conceal his astonishment at such an unparalleled outrage: “*If my enemy,*” said he by the mouth of his prophet, “*if my enemy had insulted me, I would verily have borne with it: but thou art the man of my peace, my guide, my familiar, who didst walk with me with consent in the house of God, (Psalm liv. 13.) For thee I have en*

dured the ignominies of the cross : thee I have distinguished above all my disciples : and instead of repaying me by a return of love and affection, thou heapest on me the most intolerable insults and injuries." Truly, my beloved, the crime is beyond the powers of description. The executioners who nailed him to the cross seemed to be entitled to some favour in his sight on account of their ignorance : he even prayed for them : *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* But he cannot witness the profanation of his blood on our altars, without demanding vengeance against the unhappy, the sacrilegious receiver.

Fifthly, the circumstances which attended the crucifixion of our Lord on mount Calvary, were glorious : they manifested his power and divinity, even in the midst of his humility and disgrace. All nature acknowledged him for her Creator : the centurion

confessed that he was the Son of God : the dead arose and appeared to many : he himself appeared to many on the third day, and by the splendor of his resurrection removed the scandal which the ignominies of his passion had created in the eyes of men.——But the mystical death which he suffers on our altars by the hand of the unworthy communicant, is attended with nothing but ignominy and reproach. His splendor is eclipsed : his majesty and divinity are concealed : gall and wormwood alone are the ingredients of his chalice : he is led, as it were, to execution without a sigh from the surrounding multitude : the veil which covers him in the tremendous mysteries, is not rent : all nature is silent, no repentant centurions confess that he is the Son of God : on the contrary, unbelievers who witness the irregular conduct of the unworthy communicant, and behold his approach to the holy table, take occasion to

blaspheme the name of the Lord, to ridicule the truly just man, to defame piety itself, and to say with the pharisee: "this Jesus, if he were a prophet, would certainly know who and what manner of man this is that touches and receives him; that he is a sinner." (*Luke* vii. 39.) In a word, Jesus descends into the breast of the unworthy profaner, not to rise again, but to see corruption, and to seal the death and reprobation of the unhappy criminal with the broad seal of eternity.

I do not exceed the truth: no, my beloved, faith assures us that there is no crime more enormous than the crime of an unworthy communion; and the gospel assures us, that there is none that draws down more heavy judgments on the delinquent. St. Paul declares that, *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own condemnation.* He does not say that *he is condemned,* but that *he eateth and*

drinketh his own condemnation : that is to say, that the sacred food, which he profanes, spreads like a poison, through his whole frame, penetrates even into the marrow of his bones, and becomes inseparable from his very being. By the commission of any other crime the soul is disfigured and enervated only in some of her powers ; but this crime corrupts her whole substance, and leaves no soundness in any part. There is a malediction attached to it, which is seldom or never effaced from the brow of the sacrilegious perpetrator. Every avenue to a reconciliation with his offended God is rendered almost imperviable : the graces of heaven are withdrawn, and he is left, like the unhappy Judas, the only unworthy communicant recorded in the gospel, to perish in despair. This example is worthy of your most serious consideration. Judas did not appear to be conscious that it was the Messiah that he

betrayed : in his opinion Jesus was nothing more than a just man : and when he acknowledged his crime before the council, he did not say that he had betrayed his God, but that he had betrayed innocent blood. But his ignorance did not excuse him. Satan entering into his soul at the moment that he sacrilegiously partook of the body of his Lord at the last supper ; and his death is the most dreadful, the most deplorable that is to be found in the whole extent of the inspired writings. I pretend not, however, to say, that the crime is too great to be forgiven : but I say, that the grace, the extraordinary grace which is required for true repentance, is seldom granted to the unworthy communicant ; and that few or none ever sincerely effect their reconciliation with their much injured God.

Jesus, while on earth, appeared to pay less attention to his natural body

than to his eucharistical body in the blessed Sacrament. He pardoned the injuries inflicted on the one, but was inexorable respecting the other. He did not refuse to dwell in the poorest cottage: he did not complain even when he had not a place whereon to lay his head: he chose for the place of his birth the habitation of brute beasts. But when he celebrated the mystery of his last supper, ah! then he commanded his disciples to prepare a large, commodious, furnished apartment: all was to be in order: all was to correspond with the magnificence and sanctity of this august sacrament. Now, it is this eucharistical body, of the glory of which our Lord appeared so jealous, that the sinner pollutes and vilifies: it is this eucharistical body he crucifies in the manner the most ignominious and odious. Oh! who can conceive the enormity of his crime! If the ark of Israel overturned and

broke in pieces the idol of Dagon when it was placed by its side; why does not the true ark of Israel, — Jesus Christ, when he descends into the breast of the unworthy, immediately reduce to ashes the polluted vessel which dares to receive him? If flames burst out from the sanctuary, and destroyed the rash Levites who presumed to offer incense with unhallowed fire; why do not flames burst from our altars, and consume the sinner that dares to insult the Lord himself?—Ah! the visible judgments of God are restrained: but it is only that the more dreadful judgments might be inflicted hereafter. The divine justice enkindles a fire, not in the sanctuary, but in the place of woe, where it will never be extinguished. It does not inflict immediate death on the delinquent, but it strikes him with an invisible anathema. It does not rend the bowels of the unhappy wretch, but it closes the bowels

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of God's mercy in his regard, and abandons him to the corruption of his heart.—These, my beloved, are the severest judgments which God can inflict.

Let me exhort you, therefore, to reflect on, and to abhor the crime of a sacrilegious communion. It is not my intention that the terrible description I have given should deter you from approaching to the holy table. God forbid. What! shall it be supposed that, because I endeavour to deter you from insulting the Lord of Glory, I am promoting the reign of irreligion, and deterring you from expressing your love and veneration for him? Shall it be supposed that, because I warn you against the danger of converting the bread of life into a deadly poison, I am advising you to abstain altogether from it, and thus deprive yourselves of the necessary means of salvation? Shall it be supposed that, because I say, that, unless you be

duly prepared to receive the gifts of the Father of Mercies, you will receive a serpent instead of a fish, a stone instead of bread; shall it be supposed that I am advising you not to prepare yourselves at all, but to renounce at once all the blessings and favours of heaven? No: my beloved, such a supposition cannot be formed. The bread of life is necessary for you; your eternal salvation depends on the frequent participation of it: unless you eat his flesh and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you,—The object, therefore, of this discourse is to induce you to look seriously into yourselves, and if you discover that you have at any time incurred the guilt of an unworthy communion, to devote the remainder of your lives to the severest penance. But if you have reason to believe that this has never been your unhappy lot, then it is my object to induce you to make some reparation by the superabundance

of your love, for the injuries offered to the God of majesty in this sacrament by unworthy Christians. Offer up your hearts, therefore, on the altar of divine love in behalf of your brethren. Present yourselves frequently at the holy table, and offer up your communions for them. Your prayers will be acceptable to the Lord, and on your account he will enlighten the darkness of unbelievers, he will shower down the graces of repentance on the unworthy communicant, and he will reserve a crown of justice for you against the great day of final retribution.

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**SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER
 PENTECOST.**

ON THE OBSTACLES OPPOSED BY
 SELF-LOVE TO A LIFE OF VIRTUE.

*None of those men that were invited
 shall taste of my supper.*

Luke xiv. 24.

IN this parable our blessed Saviour exposes the perverse opposition of the heart of man to the calls and inspirations of heaven. We all say with the man to whom this parable was addressed; *blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* We all desire this happiness; and we all propose to attain

it. But when the moment arrives that we must forsake our worldly pursuits, that we must lay aside the defiled garments of sensual pleasure, and prepare for the wedding ; ah ! then we begin all at once to make an excuse. The farm, the oxen, the wife, something or other is sure to be in the way that requires our attendance : we are unable to disengage ourselves from our temporal occupations ; or, in other words, our affections are so entirely fixed on the things of the world, that the delights of the royal banquet of Jesus are not sufficiently attractive to engage us to give them the preference.

But, my brethren, excuses of this kind will not be admitted : *not one of these men shall taste of my supper.* It is not sufficient that we love virtue : we must follow it, or we shall be cast into outer darkness, however plausible may be our excuses. That you may not be deceived in a point of such conse-

quence, I will examine the usual pretexts which are alledged on these occasions, and will prove their insufficiency to exempt you from the general sentence which was pronounced on all those who refused to comply with the invitation of their Lord.

1. I readily admit that notwithstanding the universal depravity of mankind, iniquity has not so far prevailed as to meet with public applause; and that, in general, men are not so corrupt as to pride themselves on their profligacy, or, as the apostle says, to glory in their shame. Vice still continues to be branded, in part, with the infamy it deserves: every one endeavours to conceal it from the public eye; and the remains of our primitive innocence retain sufficient influence over the mind to compel it to condemn in public, what its depravity is too apt to countenance in private.

There is, however, a way of living

which has obtained the approbation of the world, —a way which is not defiled by excess, —a way which, in appearance, is conformable to the laws of the gospel, but which, in reality, is as opposite to its spirit, as the way which is followed by the most profligate worldling. This is the kind of life which the world is accustomed to hold out to those who are really disposed to save their souls, under pretence that all beyond this is nothing but bigotry and superstition.

Hence arises the first great obstacle to piety. From this false idea of virtue which is entertained by the world, we contract a certain fear or shame which hinders us from devoting ourselves to the pure service of God. In order not to act in opposition to the general opinion, we do many things which our consciences condemn, and we omit others which we are too well convinced ought to be performed. The defence

which is usually set up for this kind of conduct is, that we are obliged to conform with the prevailing customs, and that other people entertain no scruple on that head : that it is not positively condemned by the gospel, and that it is presumptuous to censure the ways of all mankind by adopting singularities. Thus it is that the timid Christian either refuses to be enlightened, or is induced to accommodate himself to the world, and, like David in the court of king Achis, is obliged to disguise himself in the presence of others. Seldom does he dare to appear in his true dress ; whilst the libertine shews himself without constraint, and refuses obedience to the laws of God without a blush.

How long, christian brethren, shall we refuse to open our eyes to the light of truth? We are averse to the practice of true piety, because it fixes the eyes of the world upon us, and makes us appear singular. But in the present dis-

ordered state of the world, how is it possible to be saved and appear otherwise? When it is publicly known that by far the greatest part of mankind are amusing themselves in the broad road that leadeth to destruction, can it be expected that the few who designedly separate from them, and choose to walk in the narrow path of the gospel, will be suffered to pass without experiencing some degree of ridicule? And, what if we are singular, and are pointed at, is that a motive to deter us from consulting our own safety? Would Noah have been justified if he had refused to build the ark on any plea that he could offer, drawn from the singularity of such a proceeding? Would Lot have escaped the flames of Sodom if, from the apprehension of appearing singular, he had obstinately persisted in a resolution not to leave it? Men are never more deceived than when they reason only from appearances. The saints were

singular in every age : we are become, says St. Paul, spectacles to angels and men. If you propose to save your souls, you must live in a far different manner from the generality of mankind : the multitude walk in the broad road, and if you walk with them your ruin is inevitable. — But why should we be solicitous for pretexts to refuse submission to the will of heaven ? Shall we always find reason enough for offending God, and living for a world which we ought to hate and fly from, as being the most determined enemy of our souls, and never one that would persuade us to return to so good—so beneficent—so loving a God ? That there should be men in any situation of life who can deliberately withdraw themselves from the service of God, on any pretence or plea whatever, is astonishing. That this should be the habitual practice of almost every individual, is beyond conception, and beyond

all measure to be lamented. Yet so it is. Conformity with the gospel is never convenient. In addition to the plea of singularity, one pleads the natural levity of youth; another the infirmity and decrepitude of old age: hurry and solicitude of business when prosperity smiles is alledged by one, and the agitation of mind when in adversity is alledged by another. In all the possible circumstances of life there is a reason found to justify tepidity and negligence in the service of God.

But, my beloved, by acting in this untoward manner, what is it we do? We frustrate the intentions of the Almighty, and disappoint all the most friendly views of heaven in our regard. We suffer the time of mercy to escape: and, as if insensible of our own wants, and wholly indifferent about the means of alleviating them, indignantly turn aside from the hand which is ready open to relieve us. Alas! how different is

the conduct of the worldling when in pursuit of temporal wealth or honour ! He suffers no opportunity to escape. The whole study of his mind is bent upon it : he is not to be turned aside by any difficulty he may have to encounter : he is not to be discouraged by any danger or disappointment. Oh ! no : the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. They are constantly on the watch : but we who neither love the world, nor hate it, are never in a condition to enter seriously into any of the satisfactions of the present world, nor willing to prepare for the happiness of the world to come.

How often has our God admonished, solicited, importuned us to return to the paths of virtue ! how often has he, even in the moment of our transgression, stretched forth the hand of his mercy in pure compassion towards us ! how often has he, by the secret inspir-

ations of his grace, convinced us of the dangerous consequences of a criminal life! Ah! the most unfeeling, the most inhuman man upon earth would be affected, were he to perceive that, at the moment he was plunging the dagger into our breast, we were taking measures for his escape: and shall not the tender solicitude of our heavenly parent to save us from destruction, even in the height of our rebellion against him, excite within us some sensation of regret, some sentiment of sorrow, some tender emotion of real grief and compunction at the sight of so much forbearance in the midst of the innumerable provocations, which the base ingratitude of his most favoured creatures is, one way or other, daily and hourly retorting on him?

But let not the sinner flatter himself that this system of forbearance is to endure always. There is a time, we are told,—and the warning is prophetic;

for it comes from God, — there is a time when the long and patient suffering even of this tender parent will be wearied out; when the unrighteous will go to judgment, and all chance of being re-instated in his favour, with all hope of remission, will be lost for ever. We are wrong if we imagine that he will always continue knocking at the door of our hearts. He has declared that he will not: and if we refuse to open to him at the present time, we have too much reason to fear that he will retire from us, and abandon us to all those terrible woes which he has denounced against the unfaithful servant.

How long, therefore, my brethren, shall we be deterred from the paths of virtue by these weak—these unworthy pretexts? Shall we be then only timid when salvation is at stake? Shall we be then only indolent, when the honour

and glory of God require that we should act with the utmost energy ?

2. A second obstacle which self-love opposes to a life of piety, is the idea of the difficulties with which it would be attended.—“ I know my weakness,” the timid Christian says, “ I hate a life of sin, and it is my desire never to wrong my neighbour : but the doctrine which is preached to me is above my strength. I acknowledge that, in order to live according to the gospel, I must deny myself far more than I have hitherto done : I know that Jesus will inflict theseverest judgments hereafter on those who refuse to suffer here on earth ; that they who love their souls too much in this life will lose them in the next ; that, if I do not take up my cross and follow him, I cannot be his disciple. I know that the life of a Christian ought to be a public profession of penance ; and that I cannot be incorporated with Jesus

Christ, unless I am crucified with him. This I know; and this it is that induces me to despair of attaining to true piety. I am candid, and wish not to impose upon myself or others; I acknowledge the extent of my obligations; and were I to embrace a life of piety, I would not do it by halves: I would not, like so many others, endeavour to reconcile God and the world, the gospel and self-love; for I know that, by attempting to please both, I should, in the end, be acceptable to neither."

But, allowing for the candour, where is the faith of the man who can reason in this manner? He acknowledges his weakness and incapacity: but is he ignorant that the grace of God is abundantly sufficient for him? Has he never heard the consoling sentence of his loving Master: *Come to me all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you?* Matt. xi. 28. Our Lord, indeed, declares, that without him we

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can do nothing : but does he not likewise declare, that with him we can do all things ?—that his grace is sufficient to surmount every obstacle, and give strength to the most abject weakness ? If, like the primitive Christians, we were exposed to the fury of persecutors ; if we were required to sacrifice our property, our honour, our life for the faith of Christ, then, perhaps, we might have reason to tremble at the sight of our weakness : but even then we ought to say with the apostle : *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. Nothing of this, however, is required. Peaceable in the midst of our families and friends, exposed to no danger either respecting our property or lives ; nothing more is required of us, than that we make the sacrifice of our passions, that we avoid sin, that we hate the world and its vanities, that we fulfil the precepts of the gospel, that we frequent the sacra-

ments with fervour, that we love our neighbours, that we employ well our time, and that we carry chearfully the cross of Christ. This is all that is required: and even to enable us to do this, the abundant graces of heaven are at our command. And is it possible that we should despond!

Oh! you generous disciples of former times! the most cruel torments could not separate you from the love of Christ: it was your sweetest consolation to be accounted worthy to suffer reproaches for the name of Jesus. But in these times, the duties of a christian life are insupportable if they are found to interfere with our present amusements. Heaven was a goodly pearl in the estimation of our ancestors, a treasure of immense value, which could not be purchased at too high a price: now, it is considered as of inferior value, and hardly worthy of our notice even on the lowest terms.

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But, my christian brethren, when you shrink from the difficulties attendant on a life of piety, you seem to have no idea of the consolations which God has prepared on earth for those who love him; you seem to forget that the testimony of a good conscience, and the uninterrupted peace of mind which accompanies innocence, are pleasures so exquisite, that they may be called a foretaste of that endless felicity which is reserved for you in heaven; you do not consider that all that can possibly be endured on earth, is not worthy to be compared with the recompense which awaits your patience in the world to come. But, setting aside this consideration, were you to judge sincerely, you would freely acknowledge, that a worldly life is attended with difficulties far beyond any that are experienced in a life of virtue; you would acknowledge that the constraints, the disappointments, the anxieties, and the emp-

tiness of the world, render the condition of its unhappy followers wretched and miserable. How often, upon witnessing the reformation of any of your acquaintance, have you inwardly applauded the wisdom of their choice, and secretly wished that you could imitate their example? Truly, my beloved, could the soul of the just man be displayed before you in its true state, you would be enamoured with the description of the chaste pleasures and calm felicity which enliven his days. What transports does he experience during the time of prayer, when, raised, as it were, above the earth, he contemplates the joys of eternity, and beholds, as from an eminence, the figure of this world moving along like a shadow, which passeth away, and gradually retiring at a distance from him! After pouring forth his soul before the Lord in humble supplication, what an aversion does he

feel for the profane pleasures of worldlings ! How does he pity and lament their blindness ! In his eyes they appear no better than madmen smiling on the bed of death,—than condemned criminals, who, ignorant of the sentence that is passed against them, are thoughtlessly rejoicing at the very moment when they are about to be precipitated into the awful gulph of eternity.

Ah ! my beloved, the voluptuous, the ambitious, the earthly minded will rise up against us at the last day, and, by the description of all that they endured in order to possess the means of gratifying their passions, will condemn the false pretexts by which we attempt to justify our weakness.

Let us arise from our lethargy. Cannot we do what so many others have done before us ? Why should we suffer ourselves to be carried to and fro at the mercy of the waves, when others of

both sexes, much younger than ourselves, are escaping shipwreck, and advancing safely into port? Have we not the same God to trust to as they had? Are not our hopes the same, and are we not called to the same inheritance? Yes: he has shown himself to be a God of mercy to us indeed: frequently has he stretched forth his hand to our assistance; but our pusillanimity has frustrated all his mercies. Let us arise, without delay: let us entreat the God of mercies to command us once more to return to him, and to command us with that powerful and attractive voice which no heart can resist. Then, like Peter, casting away the garments which incommode and restrain us, we will walk to him on the waters free and disengaged: yes; we will walk to him, courageously, across the boisterous ocean of the world, and pass over with ease the numerous rocks and shelves,

which oppose our entrance into the harbour of eternal bliss.

3. Far different from the obstacle, which I have combated above, is the erroneous opinion of those Christians who imagine that they can save their souls without extraordinary exertions. This error is less plausible, but is more universal and more difficult to be corrected. Its unhappy advocates can discover nothing in the gospel that condemns the maxims of self-love. Being of an easy and heedless disposition they form to themselves a plan of virtue, in which are included, under borrowed names, ambition, luxury, vanity, pleasures, and sometimes even the softer passions: their regularity consists more in avoiding excess than in doing good.

But, my brethren, be not deceived. Truth assures us that salvation is a work of difficulty, and that heaven is gained only by violence. Behold the

just man in the recesses of his obscure retreat ;—his countenance pale and disfigured, — his body weakened, and emaciated by the rigours of mortification and penance,—his soul purified by long and fervent prayer. Listen to his sighs ;—he conjures the Lord not to enter into judgment with his servant ;—in the bitterness of his soul, and with floods of tears he recalls to mind the comparatively trifling faults of his past life ;—faults into which, perhaps, he was led by surprise ;—he is alarmed ;—he trembles ;—he is unable to dissipate his fears, either by the consideration of the boundless mercies of his God, or by the view of his own numberless good works, all of which appear imperfect and devoid of merit in his eyes.

The wisdom of God has employed the strongest terms to enforce the great maxim of christian piety, that penance and the cross are as indispensable as the

sacrament of regeneration ; and that it is equally impossible to be a true Christian without self-denial, as it is to be a true Christian without baptism. This is the language of the whole gospel.

It is not, however, surprising, that the world should form erroneous ideas on this subject. The world is made up of error and deceit ; and never from the beginning has it possessed the power of forming a right judgment on the things which relate to God and religion. But, unfortunately, this illusion has its partisans even among those who follow virtue. There are many who imagine that they comply with all the duties of christian piety by attending regularly to their prayers, and frequenting the sacraments at stated times ; although at the same time they are hasty, passionate, vain, tepid, and worldly minded. There are others who flatter themselves with the idea of hav-

ing attained perfection merely because they are devout at times, because they occasionally give an alms, perform an act of mortification, and devote a few hours to prayer and meditation : although the whole of their piety is little better than caprice, and the greater part of their time devoted to vanity and pleasure.

Too true it is, that the spirit of religion is little known, even by those who profess to follow its maxims. God requires of us, not a part only of our hearts, not a few moments only of our lives, but he demands our whole hearts ; he requires that all our desires and actions be referred to him : he will not be satisfied unless we comply with all the precepts of the gospel.—Attend to this essential point: be faithful to God, and then you may hope for every thing from his mercy : you may confidently expect to enjoy true happiness, at least

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as much as human nature is susceptible of, during the time of your mortal pilgrimage; and you may look forward with hope to the possession of his promises in the mansions of eternal felicity.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE TRIALS WHICH ATTEND
PIETY IN THIS LIFE.

*The God of all grace, after that
you have suffered a little, will him-
self perfect you, and confirm you, and
establish you. 1 Pet. v. 10.*

THIS is the cheer-
ing prospect which the chief apostle
holds out before the suffering disciples
of Jesus. In the early days of Christi-
anity, the followers of the gospel were
exposed to the greatest trials: their
lives and property were at the mercy
of the most cruel and relentless ty-

rants : they were liable every hour to be seized and condemned ~~to the torture~~, or sentenced to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, for the amusement of the populace : like lambs in the midst of wolves, they were objects of hatred and contempt to the whole world. In the midst of these perils and sufferings, the apostle comforts them with the assurance that the God of all grace will quickly put an end to their pains, and give them tranquillity and peace.

We, my beloved, are not exposed to the like trials : but we have sufferings of a different kind. Whether we follow virtue or not, sufferings are unavoidable : the man of the world must suffer from the tyranny of his passions, and from other causes : the just man must suffer from the constant struggle which is required to keep his passions in subjection, and from the weariness and discontent which are sometimes experienced in a

life of piety. But after *he has suffered a little, the God of all grace will himself perfect him, and confirm, and establish him.*

That you may not be discouraged from entering the paths of holiness, by the fear of being exposed to extraordinary trials and difficulties, I will call your attention to this subject, and will prove, first, that uneasiness, satiety, and disgust, are common to every situation in life: secondly, that the trials of the virtuous are not so severe as they are generally supposed to be: and thirdly, that they are not so severe as those of the worldling, because they are attended with consolations and delights, which are never experienced in the ways of vanity.

1. Trials and sufferings are unavoidable in this life. The soul of man is formed for the enjoyment of God, and she cannot be happy until she is immersed in the ocean of the Divinity.

She is, therefore, necessarily in a state of uneasiness and constraint during the time of her sojourning on earth : she is always seeking for happiness, and cannot find it : she cannot find it in the enjoyment of created things, because she was formed for a more noble destiny : she cannot find it in the service of God, because, not being in the full enjoyment of Him, she always experiences that there is something wanting to satisfy her desires.

If happiness were attainable on earth, it would be attainable in the service of God ; because religion softens the asperity of the passions, moderates the restless desires of the breast, gives ease and tranquillity to the afflicted mind, and imparts a foretaste of that perfect happiness which is reserved for the faithful servant in the mansions of the blessed. Of all the states and conditions in life, that of holiness approaches the nearest to felicity ; but as it is only

the path which leads to perfect felicity, and not felicity itself, man must necessarily remain in this life in a state of comparative anxiety and solicitude.

With what appearance of reason, then, can we complain that the paths of virtue are strewed with thorns? If the world imparted happiness to its followers, we might, perhaps, be allowed to accuse God of ill-treating his servants, and of being a less kind and indulgent master than the world. But examine every state; interrogate every sinner; consult one after another the partisans of the different pleasures which the world affords, and of the different passions which it inspires; consult the envious,—the ambitious,—the voluptuous,—the trifler,—the revengeful. Ah! they will all complain: they will all say that they are not happy: they will all declare, that their moments of uneasiness and pain

are far more numerous than their moments of pleasure.

But why does God leave his faithful servants in a state that is painful to nature? My friends, he has important reasons for it. It is by the means of these sufferings that our affections are to be weaned from this world, and that our thoughts and desires are to be raised up to those eternal mansions where sorrow and mourning are no more.—If virtue were always attended with sensible consolations, it would receive its reward on earth. The Christian would enter into the service of God with the view, not so much of preparing himself for the good things of eternity, as of acquiring peace and happiness on earth. The Lord would have only mercenary and selfish adorers, who would present themselves before him, not to carry his yoke, but to repose under the shadow of his cross ;

—workmen, who would offer themselves, not so much to bear the heat and fatigues of the day in his vineyard, as to regale themselves with its fruits.

The just man lives by faith : now faith looks forward to some invisible good, of which we are not as yet in complete possession. It gives us no immediate hold of the objects which it sets before us. Its views are all essentially prospective : his country,—his pleasures,—his inheritance,—his kingdom, are all of this kind. This is not his day ; he looks for nothing here,—The present time is the time of tribulation and anguish : the earth is the land of exile and sorrow. Why, therefore, should we seek after ease and comfort in a place where every thing reminds us of our unhappy lot, where we are exposed to innumerable dangers ; where, unless we use the greatest circumspection, every hour will in

crease the treasure of wrath which we have already heaped up against the day of wrath. If real happiness could be found at a distance from God, our infidelity would appear to have an excuse ; but the world is attended with disgust and bitterness, as well as piety : were we to change masters, we should only exchange one species of sufferings for another. The world, I allow, has a more pleasing exterior than piety : but this is all : its pretended delights are nothing but vanity, and affliction of spirit.—Since, therefore, we must necessarily carry the yoke either of the world or of religion, is there any room for hesitation ? Is it not better to suffer for a reward, than to suffer for nothing ?

2. The sufferings, however, of the virtuous man, are not so grievous as the worldling supposes.—Although we acknowledge that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ;—although

we say that the present life is the time for bringing forth the new man,—the time of labour and travail, we do not mean to insinuate that piety is either burthensome or insupportable. The interests of truth require that we should speak a very different language. For, were piety of no other service than merely to repress the tyranny of our passions, to free us from the galling yoke of the world, and to raise us above its hopes and fears, its agitations and vicissitudes; were this, I say, the only privilege belonging to piety, what state on earth would be preferable to it? In point of real worth, would it not far outweigh any of the pleasures of the world? Would it not be infinitely more agreeable to mourn with the children of God, than to participate in the insipid and puerile joys of the children of iniquity?

But piety has many other advantages. It reconciles the mind to the miseries

and afflictions which are inseparable from the state of mortality : it subjects the heart to the will of God : it causes us to discover, in the hand that chastises us, the hand of a tender Father, who has no other object in view than our salvation.—Now, what can be more desirable in this land of exile and misery, where every day is distinguished by new afflictions and disappointments ; where every desirable object seems to fly from our embraces ; where our friends, our relations, our protectors are daily snatched away, and hurried into the grave ; where nothing is certain, nothing is permanent : what can be more desirable, than the state which administers the sweetest consolation on these trying occasions ? what can be more desirable than the state in which the soul reposes in calm tranquillity, and the mind is undisturbed and unchanged in the midst of the incessant changes which every where take place around her ?

Besides, the sufferings peculiar to the virtuous man consist of nothing more than the repugnance or antipathy that is felt in fighting against the inclinations of corrupt nature, in resisting the impetuosity of the passions,—those fatal sources of all our guilt and of all our evil. I am far from thinking that a conflict like this can be kept up, or that our disorders can be cured without a struggle: I know that the struggle is great, and that the remedy is painful. At the same time, I am very sure that evils are avoided by this means, which are far more insupportable. The sword of the spirit, the only instrument by which our cure can be radically effected, is, I own, sharp and penetrating, and goes to the quick; but it goes there only to let out the impostume which our corruption had engendered within us, and the remainder of our lives is ease and comfort.

have industriously set up, by the irregularity of our disorderly pursuits.

3. But allowing, for the sake of argument, that the service of God is irksome and painful to nature, still, I contend, that it is far preferable to the service of the world. For, my beloved, what is the life of the worldling? Let the opinion, which he entertains of it himself, be solemnly enquired into, and he will tell you that he is a stranger to true peace and joy : that he is a man of sorrows : that the variety of his pleasures creates only a variety of disquietudes and disgusts : that his life is frequently a burthen to him : that his days are spent in an insipid round of visits, of company, of amusements, of trifles, which have lost their novelty, and afford him no other satisfaction, than that of passing away in an useless and insipid manner the time which would otherwise hang heavy on his hands : he will tell you,

that in his soul there are a constant flux and reflux of hatreds, of desires, of disappointments, of jealousies, of hopes, which imbitter all his pleasures, and which will not suffer him to be content with himself, although surrounded by every thing which the world can afford.

Such is the state of the worldling. What comparison, then, can be formed between the tumultuous agitations of the passions, and the trifling, but consoling pains of virtue,—between the excruciating torments of remorse, and the pleasing sorrows of repentance, with the promise which they hold out to us of immortal happiness? My God! is it possible that the man, who has known the world, should complain of thy service! Is it possible that thy yoke should appear heavy to him who has borne the yoke of his passions! Ah! the thorns which Thou hast scattered over the hallowed

paths of virtue, are flowers when compared with those with which the ways of the world and of vice are strewn on every side.

How frequently do the advocates and followers of vanity exclaim against this very world which they serve? How frequently do they lament their unhappy lot? How frequently do they cast the severest reproaches on its ingratitude and injustice? How frequently do they censure, condemn, and despise it, and declare that it is insupportable? — But, my beloved, when is the man of piety ever known to cast invectives on virtue? to condemn and despise it, or lament that he has entered a path that is so beset with labours and sorrows? — How frequently does the world itself envy the lot of the just man, and declare that he alone is truly happy? — But where is the just man who envies the lot of the worldling? who applauds the choice that he

has made? who declares that he alone is happy? and who considers himself as one of the most unfortunate and wretched of mankind?—Frequently have sinners been driven by disgust of the world; and by despair, to the most fatal extremities: frequently have they lost their peace of mind, their health, their reason, and their life: frequently have they fallen into a state of the most gloomy melancholy, and have considered existence as their greatest torment. But what just man has ever been hurried by the sufferings of virtue into such terrible extremes? The best of men may sometimes be heard to exclaim, in the words of our Saviour: *How am I straitened until my salvation be accomplished*, (Luke xii. 50.): but the restraints of holiness they prefer before all the pleasures of vice. It is true, they sometimes seek for a greater share of comfort from above, and it is natural they should:

X 4

but the consolations of this world are things which they utterly despise. They suffer, but the hand which inflicts the punishment, upholds them, and guards them against temptations which are above their strength. They feel what you call the weight of the yoke of Jesus; but when they reflect on the heavy weight of the yoke of iniquity which they formerly endured, they bless God for the happiness they now enjoy, and are convinced that their present sufferings are comparatively light and easy.

In fact, the trials of the just man are, for the most part, crosses which he voluntarily places on his own shoulders, and on that account are infinitely more supportable than the crosses of the world, which are never voluntary. The sufferings of the virtuous are painful only to the senses; they never affect the soul: they are insupportable only to the tepid and

slothful. The distaste which is felt for the exercises of piety, is felt only in the beginning of a new life ; it soon wears off, and is succeeded by the most pure tranquillity and delight. The more ardently a Christian devotes himself to the service of God, the lighter will be the repugnance and the difficulty he will have to encounter. Whereas the sufferings of the worldling are constantly on the increase. The more ardently he devotes himself to the service of the world, the more is he tormented by satiety, irksomeness, and disgust.

In a life of piety, there is no pain without its consolation : there is no repugnance or disgust, but what is amply compensated for by interior delights. Look into the heart of the just man. Behold the serenity within him ;—a soul unruffled, and a conscience that is always clear. The worm

of remorse is destroyed, and the weight of iniquity taken away. In the midst of sufferings and distress, he knows that every pang, every sigh is recorded in the book of life, and an eternal reward assigned to them all. He is submissive without reserve to the will of his tender Father, because he knows that in all his dispensations he consults the good, and not the inclinations of his faithful servant. He is enriched with heavenly graces, which uphold and strengthen him in every trial and temptation. His piety is nourished, and his soul is enraptured by the solemnization of the mysteries of religion, and particularly by the great mystery of love,—the Holy Eucharist. His confidence is enlivened by the scriptures, which declare that mourning and tribulation are the inheritance of the elect in this life. His patience is increased by the examples of the saints,

who were all proved by the same spiritual dryness, and by the same trials. But above all, his hopes are animated by the inexpressible delight with which he looks forward to the happy state which awaits him hereafter: the prospect of the great ocean of eternity makes all that passes with time appear little and contemptible.— Oh! what abundant resources are there in store for the faithful Christian! What a disproportion between the sufferings of virtue, and those of vice! How sensibly is this difference felt, and how sincerely is it acknowledged by those who, after having devoted their early days to the world, and to the gratification of their passions, have been reclaimed to the paths of holiness! With what sentiments of gratitude do they bless the mercies of the Lord! and with what regret do they exclaim with St. Augustin: too

*late have I known Thee, O ancient truth!
too late have I loved Thee, O ancient
beauty !*

Happy the man, who has been dis-abused without the help of experience, and who has discovered, without the loss of innocence, the vanity of the world, and the wretched slavery which attends the unrestrained indulgence of the passions. Alas ! since we must at length be undeceived, and be compelled to despise and abandon the world ; since the day *will* come, when we shall discover that its pleasures are empty, disgusting, and insupportable ; since the day *will* come, when, of all its senseless joys, nothing will remain but anguish and remorse, why should we not tear ourselves in time from the misery which all such reflections as these will infallibly occasion ? why not perform to-day, what we hope and intend to perform hereafter, when the difficulty of the execution will be in-

creased an hundred-fold? why wait, before we apply the remedy, till the wounds, which the world continues to inflict on our souls, are almost incurable?

Ah! we complain of the trivial difficulties to which religion subjects us: but, my dear brethren, what did the primitive Christians endure? They sacrificed wealth, honour, property, and life: they ran to tortures and to the rack: they passed their days in chains, in dungeons, in sufferings, and ignominy: they were not dismayed at the sight of death in its most frightful shapes: they were prepared to die, either by the beasts, by the fire, or by the sword. And did they complain in the midst of these complicated dangers and sufferings? Far from it. They rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. They thought that they purchased at too cheap a rate the honour of being

his disciples, and the consolation of being entitled to his eternal promises. And we, surrounded by all that our hearts can desire, subjected only to the restraints of self-denial, and to sufferings which are not worthy of being mentioned, we complain ! Oh ! let us blush, and be confounded at the sight of our pusillanimity and cowardice.

Let our complaints be for ever hushed ; and let us serve God in the manner that he wills us to serve Him. If he lighten the yoke, let us bless his mercies for this tender regard to our weakness : if it be his will that we endure the whole weight, let us esteem ourselves happy that he consents even at that price to receive our homage, and admit us to his friendship. Let us reflect that, notwithstanding the repugnance and dryness which the virtuous sometimes endure, there is no true pleasure but in the service of God,

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.... Rom. viii. 18.

WHAT consolation, my brethren, do these words impart to the suffering Christian! What motives do they suggest for patience and resignation! What inducements do they hold out to us to take up, with alacrity and joy, the cross of Christ, and to walk after him in the path

gilded palace is the scene of as much unhappiness, as the meanest cottage.

Nevertheless, doomed as we are to suffer, we refuse to reap advantage from our sufferings. We are ingenious in devising the means of depriving ourselves of the merit of patient endurance. At one time, we imagine that our weakness is incapable of supporting affliction : at another, that our afflictions far surpass those of others : at another, that, in the midst of sufferings, it is impossible to apply to the great affair of salvation. I will examine these various excuses ; and I hope that my reflections will convince you of the truth of my text, *that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.*

I. The first excuse for our impatience under the ordinary afflictions we meet with, is generally drawn from our natural weakness. We say that

are ruffled by the least contradiction, and impatient under the most trifling affliction, it is precisely on that account that we are oftentimes visited with the severest trials.

But what is this weakness, this sensibility which we alledge as a cover for our impatience? It is nothing less than an excessive love of ourselves,—a love, which will not allow us to offer any violence to our inclinations, and which places its happiness in nothing but the gratification of its own humour. This is our weakness : and if, in such a state, God had not visited us with afflictions, if he had not thwarted our inordinate desires of wealth by losses and failures, if he had not humbled our self-love by contradictions and affronts, our virtue would long since have been lost ; and had the object of our petition been granted, instead of the fancied happiness we were so eagerly in

shafts of affliction, ought likewise to open a free access to the soothing balm of grace and love. For murmuring and impatience, therefore, however we may plead the natural softness of our temper and disposition, there can be no excuse.

Resignation in the time of trial, I allow, is attended with difficulty; but this is no more than what attends the observance of the other precepts of the gospel. It is very difficult to pardon an injury, and to love those who hate us. It is very difficult to renounce the world, and to be poor in spirit in the midst of affluence. It is very difficult to conquer ourselves, to suppress the rising motions of the soul, to keep within the bounds of duty, and to be always on the watch. It is very difficult to deny ourselves, to take heaven by violence, and, like the labourers in the vineyard, to bear the burthen of the day, and the heats.

knows what is necessary for us ; and in the dispensation of afflictions, he seeks not our ruin, but our salvation.

Could any except wise motives induce the Lord of mercy to chequer the path of life with miseries and pains ? Is he a cruel God, that delights in the misfortunes of his creatures ? or can it be imagined that it is at all necessary to his happiness, that we should be left in a state of suffering ? Oh ! no : he never chastises us but with a view to our greater happiness ; and even at the time that his indignation appears to be most enkindled against us, like a tender and loving parent, he remembers that we are his children, and he is filled with commiseration at the sight of the wounds which his love of justice, and the tender concern which he feels for our future welfare, oblige him to inflict upon us. His object is, (and it is all that we have to look to) that though the momentary tribulations of

of being brought forward as a justification of your complaints, will become your sweetest consolation in the hour of trouble and adversity.

2. Another very ordinary excuse for murmuring and impatience, is drawn from the peculiar nature and excessive weight of our afflictions. We are always inclined to believe that our crosses are different from those of others : and, lest the example of their longanimity and piety should condemn our pusillanimous conduct, we endeavour to justify the dissimilarity of our behaviour by the dissimilarity of our condition. We imagine that we could patiently endure afflictions of any other kind ; but that those, to which we are subjected, admit of no consolation. The more we examine what passes in the world, the more singular do our misfortunes appear in our eyes ; and we conclude by observing, that it is a difficult thing to preserve an evenness of

nation, and you will see that they all passed through tribulations of the most extraordinary kind. The less your afflictions, therefore, resemble those of other men, the more you have reason to rejoice and hope, that as you partake of the lot of the just in this life, so you will be united with them in the next.

If your afflictions were only slight and momentary, they would not produce the desired effect; they would not wean your hearts entirely from the world, nor fix them solely on God: your sorrows would be forgotten as soon as past, and you would return to your former vanities and pleasures with greater ardor than ever. God, therefore, who knows the dispositions of your hearts, endeavours to prevent your return to the world, by visiting you with afflictions, which will admit of no other consolation than that which is inspired by religion; and he suffers

these afflictions to continue, that your hearts may be for ever fastened to the cross, and indissolubly united to him. What reason have you, then, to complain? Great sufferings are the effect of the singular mercies of God: your disorders stand in need of severe remedies; and the less you are spared, the more speedy will be your cure. Rather exclaim, with holy Job: in the painful state in which thy providence has placed me, O Lord! it is my sweetest consolation to reflect that Thou dost not spare me, and that Thou attendest more to my salvation, than to the pusillanimous desires of my heart.

If the arguments I have adduced be not sufficient to hush the murmurs of complaint, then I would advise you to enter into judgment with the Lord. Consider impartially how matters stand between you and the Almighty. On one side, consider your crimes; and on the other, your afflictions. Com-

pare the severity of your punishment with the enormity of your offences : and if you discover that the Lord has exceeded the bounds of justice, boldly reprove him ; raise your voice, and let your complaints be heard. Hitherto you have compared what you suffer with what you are content to suffer ; now, at least, compare it with what you deserve to suffer. Gracious God ! what a reckoning is here, in the innumerable, re-iterated offences you have committed, each of which is deserving of an eternity of wo ! and you have the folly, or rather, audacity to murmur against the mercies of a God who is desirous of commuting these never-ending torments for short and trivial sufferings, — sufferings, which may be alleviated, and sweetened by the consolations of piety and religion !

Wretched and infatuated men ! you are attached to sin, and ask for blessings ! But, wo to your unhappy souls,

should the Lord in his anger grant your petition. God is terrible in his gifts, as well as in his wrath. Sin must be punished, either here or hereafter. And if the Lord should exempt you from sufferings in this world, be assured that he would reserve them all for the next. No state is so alarming as to be a sinner, and to live free from affliction and pain.

It may not, however, be unseasonable to enquire, whether your afflictions are, in reality, so great as you represent them? It too frequently happens, that the violence of passion occasions the acuteness of our sufferings, and that the excessive grief we feel for the loss of property, friends, or reputation, arises from the inordinate warmth of our attachment to them. It too frequently happens, likewise, that every thing which relates to ourselves, appears great and extraordinary: the idea, too, of our being singularly af-

flicted, flatters our vanity, at the same time that it seems to justify our complaints. We, in some degree, expect that the whole circle of our acquaintance should express as much concern for us, as if we were the greatest sufferers on earth. But, my beloved brethren, had we learned to estimate the afflictions of others, how different would be our sentiments! Were we capable of ascertaining the truth, we should perhaps discover that our afflictions are far inferior to those of the greater part of mankind. We enjoy consolations of many kinds, to which other people are strangers: and were we to weigh in an even balance our crosses and our enjoyments, we should be convinced that there was greater danger to be apprehended from the multiplicity of our temporal comforts, than fruit to be expected from the variety of our afflictions. Let us, from time to time, enter the cottage of des-

titute and unprotected poverty, where modest bashfulness and resignation conceal from the public eye miseries and distresses, of which we have hitherto had no conception. Let us visit the asylums of charity,—the public hospitals, where all the evils incident to human nature appear concentrated together. There we may form a just idea of our own afflictions: there, with a heart bleeding at the sight of so many woes, we shall blush to give the name of woe to the sufferings which have fallen on our lot: there, our murmurs against heaven will be changed into canticles of thanksgiving; or rather, the view of the multiplied crosses, from which we have been preserved, will induce us to dread the lenity of a just and injured God, instead of complaining of severity.

Let us, therefore, hush every murmur of impatience; and particularly, let us renounce the unchristian idea

that afflictions are a sufficient excuse for neglecting the great business of salvation.

3. Every affliction is sent by a merciful God for the express purpose of promoting our sanctification. How astonishing is it, therefore, that a Christian should take occasion from thence to murmur against the wisdom and goodness of God, and accuse him of imposing crosses on his shoulders, which prevent his application to his eternal welfare. And yet, nothing is more common. When we exhort a wretched sufferer to take advantage of his momentary tribulations, and by patient endurance to merit heaven, he replies that, in the midst of such distress, he is incapable of serious reflection; that the pains and contradictions, which assail him on every side, irritate his mind, and distract his thoughts, instead of recalling him to a proper sense of duty and religion; and

that he must be tranquil and composed before he can apply his thoughts to meditation and prayer.

Of all the pretexts which are alledged by the impatient, this is at once the most criminal and the most irrational. It is the most criminal, because it is little less than blasphemy against Providence, by insinuating that he has placed us in a state which is incompatible with the means of salvation. Every thing which the Almighty does, or suffers to be done, he does, or suffers to be done, for no other purpose than to facilitate the ways of eternal life. Every event is intended by him to promote our sanctification. The whole world itself is only a preparatory place for the world to come. All that passes away has a secret connection with that eternal duration, when nothing will pass away. The world is, on no other consideration, worthy the providential

care of a wise and merciful God, than because its revolutions are the means of forming the Church in Heaven. He acts in time, with a view only to eternity. To pretend, therefore, that he has placed us in a state, which not only prevents, but is even incompatible with our eternal interests, is, in fact, blaspheming against his adorable wisdom, and reducing him to the rank of a subordinate being, by circumscribing his power within the limits of this visible world.

This pretext is likewise irrational: for no sinner can return to God, unless he withdraw his affections from the world; and never is he so effectually enabled to withdraw his affections from this miserable world, says St. Augustin, as when the Lord mixes bitterness and sorrow in the chalice of his pleasures. Lord, exclaims the prophetic king of Juda; I forgot Thee in my prosperity and abundance. The pleasures of royalty had corrupted my

heart; but thou hast stricken me, by pouring forth the cup of thy wrath on my people, and by the other severe afflictions which I have endured : Thou hast stricken me, and I am awakened : Thou hast humbled me, and I am returned to thee.

This is the most natural effect produced by tribulations. They facilitate every duty, and by causing us to experience both the treachery and weakness of creatures, and the vanity and emptiness of the world, enable us with ease to withdraw our affections from them, and fix them totally on God.

Come, then, my Christian Brethren : let us pour forth the sorrows of our hearts before the throne of all grace and consolation. Under the shadow of the cross, we may forget our woes, our tribulations, and our sighs. Hitherto we have indulged the feelings of human anxiety and impatience : a thousand times have we

wished that the eternal wisdom of God would bow down to the senseless projects of our hearts; that he would adopt and follow our plans; guide us through this life by the paths that would be the most agreeable to us. Senseless mortals! as if we were wiser and better acquainted with the things that are for our peace, than the Great Sovereign Lord and Arbiter of All, in whose hands alone are truth and judgment!

Never have we entered into the designs of his Providence, as they regard our everlasting happiness. Never have we maturely considered, that the afflictions which he sends, are the means by which he proposes that we should work out our salvation. Let us, for the time to come, throw ourselves without reserve into his arms: in the meditation of his holy law, and in submission to his eternal decrees, let us seek that permanent consolation,

which we have never found in the enjoyment of creatures, and which will not only alleviate all our tribulations on earth, but will also ensure to us an eternal recompense in the kingdom of heaven.

ON SS. PETER AND PAUL.

You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth. . . . Acts i. 8.

WITH what fidelity were these injunctions of our Lord fulfilled by the great apostles, whose festival we this day celebrate! With what undaunted courage did they publish the name of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria! With what unwearied perseverance do we behold them traversing kingdoms and empires, scattering the seeds of faith, and every

where disseminating the inspired maxims of their crucified Jesus ! With what invincible patience did they endure imprisonments and stripes, perils by sea, and perils by land, watchings and fastings, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and finally, death itself in the cause of their Lord and Master ! *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world*, Rom x. 18.

But it is not by expatiating on the labours and sufferings of these great apostles that I propose, at present, to recommend myself to your attention : my object is to shew that we ourselves are bound to suffer. We, too, like the apostles, are called to be witnesses to Jesus ; and although we are not all enjoined to preach the gospel in the hearing of surrounding multitudes, still it is the duty of every individual amongst us, to give testimony to the truth by the innocence of his life and

the purity and sanctity of his morals. —Man's life upon earth, we are told, is a constant warfare,—a state of trial, of temptation, and of suffering; and it is by bearing up with untired patience, and becoming fortitude against the various hardships to which all must necessarily be exposed who would live piously on earth, that we are to be martyrs, and witnesses of Christ. In a spiritual sense we are required to die daily in the cause of our great Master. We must act in opposition to ourselves here, or we shall not be saved hereafter.—These are the important lessons, which, above all other things, I wish particularly to inculcate.

1. The testimony which every Christian is bound to give to the truth, is not merely the exterior profession of his faith. No: my beloved; something more is required: heaven is not gained by lifting up our hands, and say-

ing, Lord, Lord ! The testimony that he must give is of a painful nature ;—a testimony that is not belied by actions, at the time that it is outwardly professed ;—a testimony, that acknowledges the divinity of Jesus by works as well as by words ;—a testimony, that does honour to religion, that glorifies the Lord, that sanctifies the creature, and that bears witness to the good things of the life to come by the voluntary sacrifice of present things :—or, in other words, a testimony of suffering, of submission, and of desire.

In the first place, we cannot give testimony that we are true followers of Christ without suffering. The apostles have unreservedly declared, that we must be conformed to our suffering Jesus, that we must be chastised, and that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. These sufferings and tribulations are

not merely the ordinary afflictions of life, such as pains of body,—loss of friends,—vexations,—disappointments,—solicitudes of poverty and want. By no means: for, although the patient endurance of these is necessary, because they are the means of sanctification which the Providence of God employs for the accomplishment of his designs either of mercy or justice on his chosen servants; yet we shall find that there are sufferings of another kind, which may properly be said to constitute the character of a true Christian. We shall find that there is a spirit of mortification and of penance, which is to give testimony of our walking in the footsteps of our suffering Jesus, and of our being entitled to a share in his promises. Besides this, there is a spirit of self-denial, by which we are to be enabled to resist our passions, to repress our unlawful desires, to oppose our vicious inclinations, and to raise the edifice of



grace and piety on the ruins of self-love. There is a mortification of the heart, by which we are to be induced to pardon injuries ; to love those who hate us ; to speak well of those who calumniate us ; to repress the sallies of anger,—the impetuosities of temper,—the swellings of vanity ; to renounce the delusions of pride, —the empty charms of pleasure,—the dangers of familiar intercourse,—the occasions of sin ; and to take part on all occasions with religion and the gospel in opposition to the dictates of corrupt nature. There is a renunciation of self-will, which is to cause us to be circumspect and watchful over the emotions of our hearts in the various occurrences of life, lest they be misled by friendship, sullied by hatred, corrupted by flattery, seduced by human respect, blinded by interest, defiled by envy, or led astray by dissipation : —which is to cause us to be continually on our

guard, lest we be lulled into a fatal security by indolence and by public example; lest we be induced to follow inclination instead of duty, and the abuses which the world attempts to justify, instead of the precepts which the gospel enjoins. There is a life of faith, which combats incessantly the law of the members urging to sensual enjoyments, and which discovers, in almost every action, and every event, opportunities of practising self-denial and penance. And lastly, there is a continual warfare in which every Christian must be engaged in order to save his soul:—which consists in offering a holy violence to heaven, in conquering ourselves, in reducing our rebellious inclinations into obedience to the law of God, in living for God alone in the midst of objects which allure us to seek only ourselves, and in living as strangers in the world, notwithstanding its caresses and favours.

These are the sufferings which constitute the character of the true Christian. On the patient endurance of these, the possession of the kingdom of heaven depends. We are not called to be apostles, to be martyrs, nor to live in a total seclusion from the world. All have not these gifts : these honours are not conferred on every Christian. But to lead a crucified life, to mortify the passions, to deny our will, to imbibe the interior spirit of penance, is the vocation of every disciple of Jesus,—is the first duty of religion,—and is the grand leading principle, and, as it were, the soul and the essence of a christian life. He that is faithful in these things is a martyr, that is, a witness of Christ ; because, by the continual self-denials, which he practises in conformity to the precepts of the gospel, he bears testimony that Jesus is the God of his heart, that from him he expects his recompense, that he is the great judge

over all his works, that his doctrine is the doctrine of life, — the doctrine of salvation, and that the inheritance of his promises is preferable to the vain pleasures of the world, all of which he sacrifices in obedience to his will.

Now, then, let us look into ourselves, and examine whether we give this testimony to the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Do we submit to inconveniencies and fatigues, rather than neglect the duties of religion? Do we prefer the delights of piety, the sweets of innocence, before the enjoyments of flesh and blood? Have we offered up the painful sacrifice of our passions? Have we laid up a store of self-denials and good works, against that great day, when we shall be summoned to give testimony of our faith, and to substantiate our claim to the kingdom of heaven? Alas! to our eternal disgrace and confusion, may it not rather be said, that in the whole of our moral

conduct, as it regards God and eternity, there is little or nothing which can distinguish us from those unhappy men who believe not in Christ, and to whom the doctrine of the cross still remains an impenetrable secret? May it not be said, that we are neither more patient, more chaste, more charitable, more rigid in our morals, more moderate in our pleasures, more equitable towards our brethren, more circumspect in our words, nor more disengaged in our affections from the world, than the very heathens themselves, who know not God? and that the only difference between us and them, is that, professing as we do, a law of sanctity unknown to them, we have the singular merit of being *more enlightened, and worse men.*

2. In the second place, we are required to give testimony to Jesus, by the submission of our understanding, and by the subjection of our will to

his holy law.—Submission of the understanding consists in believing the incomprehensible mysteries of revelation on the authority of the word of God,—in captivating our reason to the obedience of faith,—and adoring in silence the awful secrets of heaven. Faith assures us, that the eye of mortal man is not able to penetrate into the regions of inaccessible light, and that any researches behind the veil which the Lord hath drawn before the sanctuary, are presumptuous and vain. By submitting our understanding therefore, we give testimony to the unerring authority of God: we acknowledge the impiety of scrutinizing into secrets, which eye hath not been permitted to explore, nor ear to hear; and we are restrained from mingling the vanity of our reasonings, and the folly of our conjectures, with the simplicity of christian faith: we are induced to look down with pity and compassion on those deluded men, who measure

every thing by the standard of human reason, and who reject the authority of God by rejecting the authority of the Church which he established : we are convinced that there is nothing so noble, so becoming a finite existence, as a total reliance on him who is infinite and eternal ; and we are prepared not only to pay due respect and attention to the exterior ceremonies of divine worship, to the pious traditions of the apostles, and to the laws of the Church, but to show forth the sublimity of religion by the faithful performance of the lesser duties, and by declaring our belief that there is nothing degrading nor unprofitable in piety, except the exalting of ourselves above its rules and ordinances.

To this submission of the understanding we must add the subjection of the will, that is, we must resign ourselves up to the providence of God, and be conformed to his holy will in all

things : we must bear with patience the crosses which he is pleased to impose upon us : we must endure with calm tranquillity the infirmities of sickness, the injuries and affronts of enemies, the treachery of friends, and the loss of relations : we must submit to all occurrences, which either mortify our pride, or disappoint our expectations : in a word, we must refer every thing to a future state, and make all the evils of life subservient to the great business of salvation. This is submission of the will.

Happy, then, are you, my brethren, (if you would but think it) whom Providence has consigned to a life of poverty and labour. So far from envying the lot of the affluent and powerful, so far from repining at the dispensations of heaven, by which you are subjected to pain and toil, so far from yielding to impatience under the heat and burden of the day, to which you

alone seem to be exposed, so far from supposing that you are wretched, because you are poor, you have reason to bless the mercies of the Lord towards you. He has placed you in a state in which the will may be most easily subjected to him, and salvation obtained with the least difficulty. He has placed you in a state in which fewer and less violent temptations are found than in any other. He has placed you in a state in which the paths of virtue are made plain and easy, and the road to eternity more uniform, and infinitely less intricate than in almost any other that can be thought of. He has placed you in a state which he himself calls a happy state, because the rich are obliged by the gospel to offer violence to themselves, and to descend to the same level in which you are, by renouncing voluntarily, and through motives of piety, those pleasures, which you are not empowered to enjoy, by

acquiring interiorly that spirit of poverty which you outwardly display, and by performing extraordinary works of penance in the place of those labours which you are necessitated to undergo. Yes, my beloved, reflect, from time to time, that life is short, and that every Christian is obliged to suffer tribulation during the period of his mortal existence: reflect on this; and you will soon acknowledge that the state, which is the least calculated to fix our affections on this perishable world, which removes the farthest from our reach pleasures that tend only to corrupt the heart, which throws in our way the most frequent occasions of suffering, and which supplies the least fuel to the passions, you will soon acknowledge that such a state is the most favourable for the salvation of your souls, because in it every obstacle is removed that can impede, and every means provided that can hasten the accomplishment of this

desirable event. Reflect, likewise, that we must suffer either in time or eternity : that it is not the lot of many, or I might say, that it is the lot of none to be completely happy both in this world and the next ; that both rich and poor will be on an equal footing before the tribunal of God ; that they will be judged by the same laws ; and that the true Christian will be distinguished, not by honours, titles, and riches, but by the real worth of his character, and the sterling merit of his performances, whatever his situation may have been below.

Thus we see that in every situation of life, whether in opulence or poverty, in health or in sickness, all are bound to give testimony to Jesus by patient suffering. But by whom is this testimony given ? Do not the generality of Christians live as if there were no overruling Providence ? Alas ! is it not too true that we attribute none of the

occurrences of life to him? and that we ascribe all our sufferings and misfortunes to no other cause than to the malice of enemies, to the oppression and injustice of masters, to the treachery of false friends, or to the jealousy and opposition of competitors? Does not our conduct denote that we seem to think that men are the rulers of the universe, that every thing which is to befall us depends on them, and that their passions are the primary sources from which all the vicissitudes and reverses of life proceed?—Be no longer deluded, christian brethren; cast up your eyes to heaven, and behold the Great Creator and Preserver of all. It is he who regulates the actions of men as far as they affect us, and makes use of them as instruments to promote our eternal welfare. He is the supreme and invisible Disposer of all things. Without his permission not a hair of our heads falls to the ground. He

ordained from all eternity even those events that seem to be the most sudden and the most extraordinary; and he ordained them for the purpose of promoting our sanctification. He sports with the vain wisdom of men, and makes them contribute to the completion of his designs by the very means which they had adopted with a view of frustrating them.—These are sublime reflections: these are christian sentiments. They open an abundant source of consolation to the faithful soul. They raise him far above the reach of all human events. Truly, my beloved, if no other effect were produced by religion in the midst of the inevitable vicissitudes and tribulations of life, how pitiable is the state of the sinner who refuses to follow its maxims! No; in the whole range of the universe there is not a being to be found so truly wretched and senseless, as the man who, building solely on his own strength

and rejecting all the friendly aids which religion is ready to hold out to him, is neither to be awed into submission by a sense of the duty which he owes to God, nor awakened to repentance by the solemn admonitions of a guilty conscience.

3. Lastly, we are bound to give to our Lord Jesus the testimony of desire. Faith informs us that we are only strangers, and that there is no permanent dwelling-place to be found on earth ; that the days of our pilgrimage are short and painful ; and that heaven is our only true country. Reflection, consequently, will inform us, that it is our duty to sigh after this happy land, which is shewn to us from afar ; to refer all our labours, all our solitudes, all our works, desires, and thoughts, to that delightful term ; and never to lose sight of that place of rest, which is prepared for the people of God. It will inform us that it is our duty to

use the world, and the things of the world, as if we used them not ; to consider nothing as properly our own, but that which we can possess for ever ; to fix our affections on those things only, which will never pass away ; to desire only those permanent possessions, which will never be taken from us. It will inform us, that it is our duty to lament our long sojourning in a place where we are constantly exposed to the most imminent dangers ; where every thing is calculated to inflame the passions, and nothing to satisfy them ; where every object has a tendency to separate us from God ; and where, the farther we are separated from him, the more we are insupportable to ourselves.

These are our duties,—our indispensable duties, — the first duties of a Christian. By the faithful performance of these, we are distinguished from the children of the world ; and by

the neglect of them, we become worse than infidels and unbelievers. In a word, so important are these duties, that, because the poor and the afflicted are enabled to perform them with the least difficulty, the kingdom of heaven is declared by our Lord to be their peculiar inheritance.—By poverty, however, is meant not merely the privation of riches, but the disengagement of the affections from them. He alone is poor, in the sense of the gospel, who is poor in spirit. The man, who is discontent with his lowly state, who covets more than Providence has been pleased to give him, who fixes his affections on wealth, and is ready to sacrifice honour and conscience in order to obtain it; such a man is rich in spirit, at the time that he is poor by condition; he is unhappy, and he is criminal in the sight of God; he is obnoxious to the malediction which is frequently attached to riches, and he

does not partake of their temporal comforts and advantages. — On the other hand, the rich man, who is not attached to the mammon of this world, who considers the possessions which Providence has entrusted to him, as the means appointed for the exercise of charity, and for the acquisition of a title to the kingdom of heaven, who is the comforter of the afflicted, and the reliever of the distressed ; who is meek and humble of heart, and who prefers the fear of God, and the treasure of his grace, before all the riches of the earth ; such a man is poor in spirit, and he partakes of all the blessings attached to poverty, without being exposed to its privations and inconveniences.

These, my beloved, are testimonies which religion exacts from us. In this manner, every Christian is obliged to be a witness of Jesus, and an apostle of the gospel. You are not called to an-

nounce his word to the nations that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death : you are not called to forsake your country and friends : but you are called to mortify your passions through motives of piety, to accept with resignation and peace the pains and afflictions of this life, to despise all that passes with time, and to be convinced that there is nothing worthy of your affections but the good things of eternity.—Thus it is that you are to partake of the glory and crown of the apostles.—You sometimes envy the lot of those men who were favoured with the sight of our Lord on earth, and were made partakers of his admirable gifts. You may enjoy, if not the same, at least a great degree of happiness. Make the sacrifice of your passions, and withdraw your affections from all created things ; and then the presence of Jesus in your souls will replenish you with consolations above

measure.—What is there, then, to prevent us from walking in the footsteps of these holy apostles? Are we deterred by the difficulty? No: let us not think of that: we know that grace makes every thing easy.—If our happiness on earth would be promoted and increased by abandoning ourselves to the guidance of the passions, by impatience under afflictions, and by attachment to creatures, we should then have some excuse for our delay. But faith assures us, and we have learnt it by experience, that the passions are the causes of all our evils; that repining under afflictions does but increase our sufferings; and that our attachment to this earth only adds to our slavery, by multiplying the chains which bind us to it. God requires nothing at our hands but what is useful and expedient. He exacts no duty from us but what we have an interest in performing. He promises that we

shall enjoy happiness in piety, and he attaches to the observance of his law all the felicity which can be experienced in this life, and the possession of all that is delightful and promising in the next.

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